



PHD

The political process of Buen Vivir : contentious politics in contemporary Ecuador

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**The Political Process of *Buen Vivir*:
Contentious Politics
in Contemporary Ecuador**

Daniela Bressa Florentin

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath
Department of Social and Policy Sciences
June 2016

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No puedo querer ser nada.

Aparte de eso, tengo en mí todos los sueños del mundo.

Fernando Pessoa, 1928

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DECLARATION

The thesis includes material previously discussed in the author's Masters degree dissertation. The title of the dissertation is: *Between Life and Policies. The Politics of Buen Vivir in Bolivia and Ecuador*. It was submitted in August 2011 to the University of Bath and the degree of Masters of Science was awarded with distinction.

Some of the findings of this research regarding the existence of competing understandings of *Buen Vivir* have been published as a Working Paper by the Centre for Wellbeing in Public Policy (University of Sheffield).

Bressa Florentin, D. (2016) *Between Policies and Life: the Politics of Buen Vivir in Contemporary Ecuador*, *CWiPP Working Paper No.5*, Centre for Wellbeing in Public Policy, University of Sheffield.

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on social transformation involving active tensions between political structure (State) and insubordination (social movements). It does so in the context of the rise of *Buen Vivir* in institutional politics in contemporary Ecuador. It offers a detailed sociological analysis of the agents involved in the political process, providing a comprehensive account of their historical background, goals, frame definitions, and strategic actions. In doing so, the thesis argues that the political process of *Buen Vivir* in Ecuador entails the complex-multifaceted dispute over the leadership of actions of change that redefine political settlements and move the country away from the neoliberal course.

Away from essentialist and static interpretations on the matter, this thesis argues that the political process in contemporary Ecuador moves through complex dynamics, involving moments of articulation and fragmentation in which agents and events move closer to or away from what is identified as two political projects: the first one follows a top-down, State-centred strategic logic of social democracy, which I propose to call *State of Buen Vivir*. The second project follows a bottom-up, society-centred vision of insubordination which I propose to call the *Social Movement of Buen Vivir*. Theoretically, the thesis develops a productive relationship between Latin American Marxist theory of the State and a Weberian version of the construction of rebellious solidarities pursuing a historical and sociological analysis to understand the dilemmas of a necessary relationship between the State and social movements. Methodologically, it follows a qualitative research design and draws mainly on case study analysis (the CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa). The research design uses in depth interviewing with the elites within each sector, document analysis and mass media analysis.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

CAOI: Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas (Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organisations)

CODENPE: Consejo para el Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador (Development Council of Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador)

COICA: Coordinadora de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (Indigenous Coordinating Body for the Amazon Basin)

CONAIE: Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador)

CONFENIAE: Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon).

COOTAD: Código Orgánico de Organización Territorial, Autonomía y Descentralización (Legal Code of Territorial Organisation, Autonomy and Decentralisation)

CTE: Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador (Confederation of Ecuadorian Workers)

DINEIB: Dirección Nacional de la Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (National Directorate of Bilingual Intercultural Education Program)

ECLAC: Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations)

ECUARUNARI: Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui (Awakening of Ecuadorian Indigenous People)

FEI: Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (Ecuadorian Federation of Indians)

FEINE: Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas Evangélicos (Federation of Ecuadorian Evangelical Indigenous People)

FENOCIN: Federación de Obreros Campesinos, Indígenas y Negros (National Federation of Peasant, Indigenous and Black Workers)

FLACSO: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences)

ILO: International Labour Organisation

IMF: International Monetary Fund

INEC: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (National Institute of Statistics and Censuses)

ISI: Import-Substitution Industrialisation

MIR: Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left Movement)

MRT: Movimiento Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Revolutionary Workers Movement)

NGO: Nongovernmental organisation

PRODEPINE: Proyecto de Desarrollo para los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros del Ecuador (Development Project for Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples of Ecuador)

SENPLADES: Secretaria Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo (National Secretariat of Planning and Development)

UNOCAN: Unión de Organizaciones Campesinas del Norte de Cotopaxi (Union of Peasant Organisations of Northern Cotopaxi)

Introduction

In Ecuador, the government of the Citizen's Revolution,
collecting the proposals of Andean peoples,
raises the question of *Buen Vivir*
as the central objective of State policy¹.

i. Researching Contentious Politics: the State and Social Movements in Latin America

This thesis carries out a socio-political analysis on the relationship between the indigenous movement and the State in the context of rise of *Buen Vivir*² in institutional politics (being the State the locus and target of action of agents³) in contemporary Ecuador. The thesis is concerned with exposing the political nature of the struggle over the meaning and implementation of *Buen Vivir*. It argues that the political process of *Buen Vivir* moves from a first moment of articulation to a second moment of differentiation, fragmentation and concentration of power that redefines political boundaries between and within these two actors in a process of renewal of political settlements. This process of renewal is characterised by an increasing power of the State to hold more control and regulation over market forces whilst at the same time increasing the State's decision making power over public policy. This study contributes to the debate on social transformation involving active tensions between political structure (State) and insubordination (social movements), which in turn points to the process of construction of post-neoliberal alternatives in the Latin American region.

It provides an interpretation of the relationship between State and social movements away from essentialist or static understandings, highlighting key aspects of a complex dynamic

¹ SENPLADES, 2013: 23 (Spanish in the original. Author's translation).

² *Buen Vivir* is commonly translated into English as "the good way of living" (Ecuador's National Constitution).

³ Offe (1985) makes a distinction between on the one hand, 'institutional politics' in which actors' concerns are principally directed to the State, and on the other, 'noninstitutional politics', where civil society becomes both the locus and target of action of social movements in order to defend their values (identity, autonomy and the creation of democratic spaces). Cohen and Arato (1997) term this as 'self-limiting radicalism' in order to emphasise the rejection by new social movements of the need or purpose to seize power. The focus of this thesis is placed on institutional politics, and therefore in the interaction between social movements and the State.

of change that encompasses as many ruptures as continuities. This study moves away from the interpretation of co-optation, which dominates debates on the relationship between structure (the State) and insubordination (social movements). It argues that interpretations of co-optation depart from a top-down approach of social and political dynamic without fully accounting for the ambivalent but mutual relations between social agents and the State. Theoretically, it develops a productive relationship between a Marxist theory of the State and a Weberian version of the construction of rebellious solidarities pursuing a historical and sociological analysis. It sets up the main conceptual coordinates to understand the dilemmas of a necessary relationship between the State and social movements. Highly organised social movements are conceived here as inevitably political. Their actions impact heavily on State structure participating in and shaping national development. In addition, it argues in favour of a conceptualisation of the State as relational and as a platform where social conflicts are inscribed and processed by State machinery, which in turn is transformed by the process. In this way, this study proposes going beyond dichotomous thinking in the relationship between insubordination vis-à-vis structure (co-optation vs. emancipation; institutional power vs. communitarian autonomy) in order to capture the ambiguities and complexities of relational processes of social transformation.

This thesis is temporally focused on the transition from neoliberalism to the construction of a post-neoliberal order in Ecuador, focusing particularly in the period extending from 2005 to 2015. The context of the research, however, extends further, from the mid-1930s (with the emergence of the first syndicates in Ecuador which were crucial to the consolidation of indigenous organisations and their form of protest) up to the present (Chapter 1). Key aspects of the dynamic of contentious politics (between the indigenous movement and the State), as well as of the formation of the State, are located within this extended timeframe. As explained in Chapter 1, this long period of time is subdivided into three sub-periods: from the 1930s to the first agrarian reform in 1964 (from *huasipungueros* to peasants); from the 1964 agrarian reform to 1990 (formalising collective action: the return of the “Indian”); and from 1990 up to the present time (leadership, crises, and *Buen Vivir*). It is argued that the historical context of the relationship between the indigenous movement and the State is fundamental to understanding the position of the agents involved, as well as key aspects currently defined

and mobilised in the competing discourses of *Buen Vivir*. The historical context plays a constitutive role rather than an anecdotal one in the trajectory of *Buen Vivir*.

ii. Rationale: The Rise of *Buen Vivir* to Politics

Ten years ago, a popular uprising put Ecuador in the spotlight. After a decade of popular revolts, streets blockades, and elected presidents overthrown from their positions, the last of the popular uprisings brought the '*forajidos*' (the outlaws) into the Ecuadorian political and social scene. They represented the majority of people in Ecuador regardless of their political, social, class, ethnic, or cultural membership. The *forajidos* proclaimed the end of the neoliberal era in the country. More than a decade of structural adjustments, privatisations, dollarization of the economy, the rise of poverty and inequality, and a massive wave of migration had left the country in a profound crisis. As in many countries of the region, in Ecuador neoliberal economic policies were implemented with little consideration of social costs (Abouharb and Cingranelli, 2006). Whilst for more than a decade people protested on the streets (mainly led by the indigenous movement), in 2005 a vast majority of Ecuadorian population proclaimed the end of the legitimacy of the neoliberal model of governance in the country.

I argue that the main reason for this proclamation of the end of the neoliberal model at this particular point was that popular mobilisations converged with the emergence of a new political leader, Rafael Correa (elected in 2007), and a new political movement, *Alianza Pais* (Country Alliance). Although a newcomer to the Ecuadorian political scene, Correa promised radical economic and political transformations. These included declaring Ecuador's national debt illegitimate, promoting social investment and State control of the economy (by 2007 Ecuador's national debt was USD 10 billion), refusing to sign free trade treaties, denying permission to the US to use the airbase of Manta, and calling for a Constituent Assembly. These measures were sufficient to gain popular support precisely because they had been the demands set out by different collectives in the country for more than a decade (Becker, 2011).

In 2007 a national referendum approved by 80 per cent of Ecuadorian voters finally led to the call for the Constituent Assembly. Those calling for a Constituent Assembly included a plurality of social and political organisations. Notwithstanding the fact that up to that point in time Ecuador had already had 20 national constitutions (SENPLADES,

2010: 27), the writing of a new constitution was seen both by Correa's government and civil society actors as a historic moment marking the possibility of re-founding the State (Acosta, 2008; Gudynas, 2009). The Constituent Assembly summoned 130 delegates. *Alianza Pais* obtained 74 seats whilst leftist parties (included indigenous party *Pachakutik*) only obtained 13 seats. Even though indigenous and leftist organisations secured minimum representation in the Assembly, their demands overwhelmingly set the agenda of the assembly, reflecting the ability of these sectors to elaborate coherent demands and alternative projects to neoliberal governance. These demands became in turn part of the agenda of *Alianza Pais*, including the acknowledgement of Ecuador as Plurinational, the control, regulation and restriction of the extractive economy, and the implementation of land redistribution, among others.

In the 1998-constitutional reform the indigenous movement had fought for the recognition of collective rights and the implementation of already obtained social rights (Van Cott, 2005). In 2007-2008 the main dispute was related to the radical transformation of the country's development model. Groups of intellectuals, grassroots activists, indigenous organisations, civil society organisations, international networks of academics and members of political parties were among the multiplicity of social agents re-designing the principles, nature and meanings of *Buen Vivir*⁴. For the first time an idea rooted in indigenous knowledge facilitated the convergence of multiple debates (stemming from indigenous cosmologies, competing academic models of development, and so on) in the production of an alternative discourse challenging the dominant neoliberal model of wealth creation and political governance (Cortez, 2011; Radcliffe, 2012). An alternative model to neoliberalism competed against it on equal footing (Ferrero, 2014). It is argued here that this moment represents an instance of political articulation and authentic democratic deliberation. However, the nature of this debate soon revealed a power struggle making in turn the relationship between the elected government and the indigenous organisations, particularly the CONAIE⁵, tense. It was in this context of both participation and confrontation that the idea and meaning of *Buen Vivir* became radically disputed. This dispute, I argue, reveals a contentious process that

⁴ Alberto Acosta (economist and politician) was the president of the Constituent Assembly and one of those responsible for the articulation and inclusion of *Buen Vivir* in the national constitution. Close to the indigenous movement, Acosta put himself forward as presidential candidate for the 2013 elections.

⁵ *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.

ultimately has led to the strategic differentiation of political actors such as a sector of the indigenous movement and the government of Rafael Correa. This opens a new moment within the political process dominated by political differentiation and fragmentation.

This is the scenario in which *Buen Vivir* became the disputed symbol of an alternative to the neoliberal mainstream sought by the Ecuadorian people. Since then, *Buen Vivir* has been used to represent the alternative to the dominant model of development built upon economic growth and the capitalist order (Escobar, 2010; Walsh, 2010; Houtart, 2010; Gudynas and Acosta, 2011; Hidalgo Flor, 2011; Misoczky, 2011; Thomson, 2011; Dávalos, 2012). In this way *Buen Vivir* emerged as a socio-political concept (Altmann, 2015). Whilst its existence can be traced back before the Constituent Assembly in different publications written mainly by indigenous intellectuals (GTZ, 2002; Viteri, 2002; Acosta, 2002; Sarayaku, 2003), it is at the Constituent Assembly that this idea becomes the representative of broad demands for change, and a central political concept around which different discourses have been interwoven (Hidalgo-Capitan and Cubillo-Guevara, 2014). Even though *Buen Vivir* is regarded as forming part of an ancestral *cosmovision* (worldview) organising indigenous communitarian practices even before European colonisation, little attention was paid to this subject until the beginning of the 21st century.

I argue that in order to understand the process of the emergence of the idea of *Buen Vivir* into the political realm, as well as the power struggle over its definition and implementation, it is necessary to understand the dynamic of contentious politics in contemporary Ecuador. In brief, contentious politics involves interaction between organised collective actors who put forward elaborated demands and the State. Among organised collective actors, this research is principally focused on the indigenous movement and, more specifically, on the main indigenous organisation in Ecuador, CONAIE. The main reasons for this election are that this indigenous organisation was able to first articulate the movement at the national level; second, to mark its political direction articulating a coherent vision of a plurinational State; third, to achieve important political goals; and fourth, to establish itself as one of the most important social movement organisation in the Latin American region (Van Cott, 2005; Yashar, 2005; Becker, 2008; Andolina *et al*, 2009). For these reasons, CONAIE has been able to establish itself as a national and regional political actor.

My thesis is concerned with exposing the political nature of the struggle over the meaning and implementation of *Buen Vivir*. The argument is that the political process opened since its emergence moves from a first moment of political articulation to a second moment of differentiation, fragmentation and concentration of power that redefines political boundaries in a process of renewal of political settlements. This process of renewal is primarily characterised by an increasing power of the State to hold greater control and regulation over market forces, whilst at the same time increasing the State's decision-making power over public policy. In relation to the first moment of articulation, the emergence of *Buen Vivir* as a political project representing a radical alternative (of and to) development, the paradigm of a possible alternative society, a radical paradigm of social justice, and so on, can only be thought of in Ecuador as the result of the confluence of two interrelated processes: (i) the cumulative struggles of highly organised indigenous social movements, not only but particularly since the 1990s, against the implementation of neoliberal policies, articulating in turn an alternative political project (the construction of a Plurinational state); and (ii) the emergence of new political leaders on the left and a popular centre-left government implementing public policies through State institutions. The latter cannot be thought of as independent from the former and vice versa, and both processes resulted in the rise of *Buen Vivir* as a political project. In other words, the emergence and rise of *Buen Vivir* as political discourse, carried out and highly contested by the above mentioned actors, has been the result, on the one hand, of a particular permeability of the State forced by demands, including the ones enacted by indigenous social movements, and on the other, of the contingent opening of the political structure. That is to say, it has been the result of political action. Both the indigenous movement and the government of Rafael Correa have been fundamental for the rise and consolidation of *Buen Vivir* as the proxy upon which different socio-political agents in Ecuador define their position within the post-neoliberal turn in the country and the region.

In relation to the second moment of differentiation and fragmentation, the struggle deployed around the idea of *Buen Vivir* can be thought of as a power struggle over meaning and the imposition of a dominant discourse (Altman, 2015). The moment of differentiation and fragmentation is marked primarily by a process of strategic rationalisation of *Buen Vivir* in which each actor claimed a certain type of *Buen Vivir* associated with their interest in access to power. By process of rationalisation I refer to

actions that make definitions of *Buen Vivir* consistent with the political objectives of the groups supporting them. The process of rationalisation points to the expansion of the instrumental and strategic rationality at the expense of normative and moral considerations (Habermas, 1986; Domingues, 2000; Gane, 2002). This in turn led to the antagonisation of different notions of *Buen Vivir*, mainly between the government, on the one hand, and the indigenous organisation CONAIE, on the other. Each of them defines the concept in different ways according to their own interests, goals, and political battles, defending the legitimacy of the discourse they mobilise whilst discrediting the discourses held by political opponents. In this way, the definition and mobilisation of the discourses on *Buen Vivir* become a powerful tool to create and openly redefine subjective positions in the political and social arena in Ecuador. My thesis proposes an original conceptualisation of competing discourses of *Buen Vivir* through the study of the constitutive dynamic of the different framings in dispute. It is argued that the tensions between the different stakeholders involved have opened a new phase of the political process, which is named here as *the political process of Buen Vivir*.

This process of differentiation and fragmentation does not only refer to the relationship between the indigenous movement and the government, but also points to divisions within the indigenous movement. The diversity within the movement was apparent from its formation until the creation of CONAIE, the most important indigenous organisation in Ecuador, which was able to unify a fragmented indigenous population into one sole movement. This was achieved via the articulation of a coherent political project representing the diversity within the movement (explained in Chapter 1). The rise of Rafael Correa to power, the inclusion of *Buen Vivir* in institutional politics (which brings together social movements and the State) and the strategic negotiation between leaders of indigenous organisations such as FEINE, FENOCIN and FEI (discussed in Chapter 5) and the government have exacerbated the original divisions within the movement. This study based its analysis of the indigenous movement positionality *vis-à-vis* these moments of articulation and fragmentation focusing primarily on the CONAIE because of, first, its importance on the political organisation of the indigenous movement, and second, because the CONAIE is the indigenous organisation that most clearly stands in opposition to the government of Rafael Correa. The second moment of differentiation and fragmentation will be analysed both within the indigenous movement and between the movement and the government.

The question of the State is crucial in the debate and the power struggle that has unfolded since *Buen Vivir* was first mobilised and included in the national constitution. The struggle not only occupies a place in the State but defines the very foundations of it. While this debate is not new, the emergence of *Buen Vivir* as a political project certainly revives it, as well as produces new insights in the matter. The particular relationship of social indigenous movements *vis-à-vis* the State in the context of the rise of *Buen Vivir* has given place so far to a dichotomous position and reductive representations: either *Buen Vivir* represents the celebration of radical emancipation, or it represents the co-optation by the government and the State in order to maintain the status quo (resembling old discussions within the left on ‘revolution or reform’). I argue that *Buen Vivir* is neither only politically co-optation nor only essentially liberating. On the contrary, it embodies an ambivalent meaning in which power relations between indigenous social movements and the State are put into practice in a way that is transforming the political process in Ecuador. A number of authors⁶ working on indigenous social movements in Latin America, and more specifically, in Ecuador argue that it is at the level of the State that movements wage their principal struggles, and where the “Indian” Question is played out. I follow Postero and Zamosc (2004: 5) in the definition of the “Indian” Question as ‘the crucial issue of what kinds of rights indigenous people should be granted as citizens of democratic nation-states’. In negotiating their positionality, both the indigenous movement and the government deploy strategies, construct solidarities and alliances, and negotiate meaning. This is what, I argue, constitutes the political process of *Buen Vivir*.

iii. Research Questions:

This all leads us to the questions this study aims to answer:

- *In what ways is the idea of Buen Vivir defined and contested? How are these definitions used and what for?*
- *What are the strategies deployed by competing socio-political forces to impose their own definition of Buen Vivir?*

⁶ Radcliffe, 2001; Gerlach, 2003; Otero, 2003; Postero and Zamosc, 2004; Andolina *et al*, 2005; Pallares, 2007; Clark and Becker, 2007; Lucero, 2008; Becker, 2011; Perreault and Valdivia, 2010.

- *How is this contestation expressed at the institutional level? Which definition is becoming dominant at the State level and what are the consequences of this?*

In order to answer these questions, I adopt a case study design, using qualitative methods. I carry out the analysis of the interaction of the State and the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE and their political positions exploring three interrelated categories. The first one points to the strategic definition of *Buen Vivir* in order to create political differentiations (us and them) between competing forces. This strategic definition allows each force to establish its position in the political process. This category is called *Framing Buen Vivir* and is analysed in Chapter 4. The second category is called the *Mobilising Structure of Buen Vivir* and points to the main resources and strategies deployed by these competing socio-political forces in order to impose a particular definition of *Buen Vivir*. Its analysis in Chapter 5 shows the importance of political leadership and alliances to make dominant a particular definition of *Buen Vivir*. Finally, the last category is called *Mainstreaming Buen Vivir*. It is analysed in Chapter 6, and analysed the political opportunities created from below and from above to allow the expression of such a dispute at the institutional level.

The qualitative analysis of these three interrelated categories allows the identification of two distinct political projects, which I propose to call in this thesis the *State of Buen Vivir* and the *Social Movement of Buen Vivir* (analysed in Chapter 6). The configuration of these projects comes from the interplay between the agents involved – mainly the government of Rafael Correa and the indigenous movement opposing it. Both agents construct ideal conceptions of the State and of society (and their interaction) within their own definitions of *Buen Vivir*. Their actions, in turn, battle to get closer to these definitions, and denounce the actions of their political opponents as moving away from them. In this sense, it is argued here that these two political projects coming from above and from below are the two principal organising axes of the political process in contemporary Ecuador. Following Wright's typology on the logics of resistance to anti-capitalism (2015; 2014), I argue that the *State of Buen Vivir* aims at *taming capitalism*, whilst the *Social Movement of Buen Vivir* aims at *eroding capitalism*. The first political project follows a top-down, State-centred strategic logic of social democracy. The second one follows a bottom-up, society-centred vision of insubordination.

The project elaborated from above is the *State of Buen Vivir* (analysed in Chapter 6). It is related to the definition of structures and institutions linked to welfare provision, decision-making processes, public administration, resource management, and governance. This definition contributes to the configuration of the nature, institutions, functions and responsibilities of the State. Following Wright's typology, I argue that this political project mobilised from above by the government of Rafael Correa corresponds to a logic of resistance that aims at *taming* capitalism. Taming capitalism (Wright, 2015:8) points to the construction of counteracting institutions and public policies capable of significantly neutralising the harms produced by capitalism through regulation and redistribution (widespread poverty, unemployment, inequality, precariousness of labour forces, and environmental degradation).

The project elaborated from below is named in this thesis as the *Social Movement of Buen Vivir* and refers to the positions, actions and participation of socially and politically organised agents in processes of societal transformation. These agents maintain a relative autonomy from the institutions of the State while at the same time participating in its shaping. Questions of autonomy and self-determination, popular mobilization, political leadership, resources, popular participation in decision-making processes, the recognition of multiple nationalities in the same territory, and radical democracy belong to this political project (Chapter 6). In this case, the political project mobilised from below by social movements corresponds to a logic of resistance that aims at *eroding capitalism*. It points to emancipatory experiences based on more democratic, egalitarian, participatory relations in spaces and cracks within capitalism (Wright, 2015: 14).

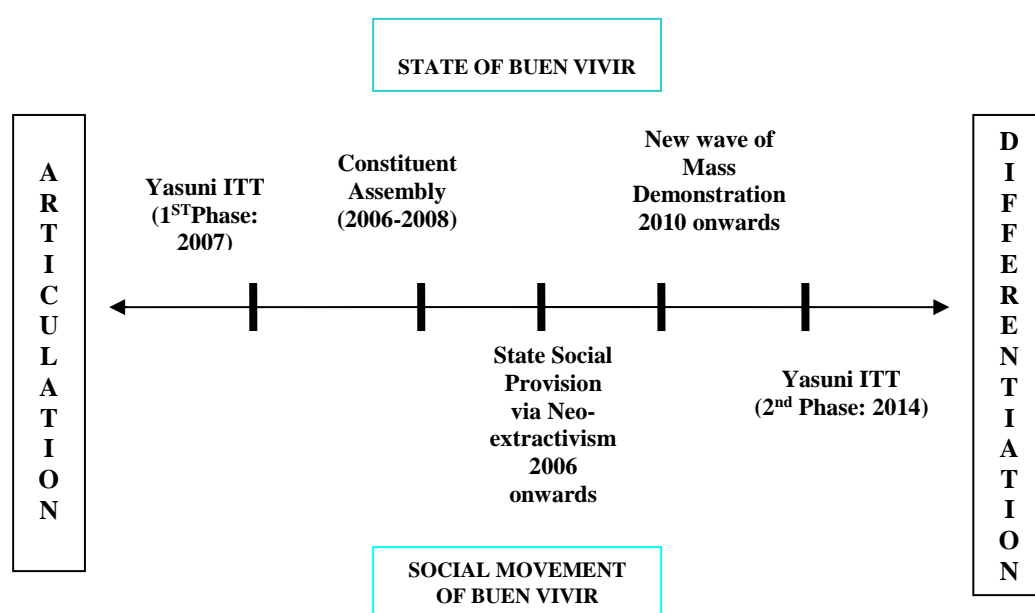
These two political projects are not in diametric opposition. There are moments of articulation and moments of differentiation between them. They ultimately set a horizon in relation to which the agents involved define their positions and interpret events. This process of articulation and fragmentation places key episodes involving contentious interaction between agents in a closer or more distant relation to and between these projects. Tilly and Tarrow (2007: 36) define episodes as 'bounded sequences of continuous interaction, usually produced by an investigator's chopping up longer streams of contention into segments'. This study identifies four key episodes which are analysed throughout the thesis:

- 1) The Constituent Assembly (2006-2008) – analysed in Chapter 1;

- 2) The Yasuni-ITT Proposal (first phase: 2007; second phase: 2014) – analysed in Chapter 4;
- 3) New Wave of Mass Demonstrations (2010 onwards) – analysed in Chapter 5;
- 4) State Social Provision via Neo-extractivism (2006 onwards) – analysed in Chapter 6.

A process of transformation entails a complex dynamic (Figure 1) that seeks to change in medium and long-term power relations forged and established over time. I argue that the analysis of these two projects and the four episodes mentioned above allows the tracing of that transformation in its own dynamic without falling into essentialisms or closed/preconceived positions.

Figure 1: Dynamic Political Process of *Buen Vivir*



iv. Structure of the thesis

This thesis argues that the struggle over the meaning and implementation of *Buen Vivir* is political and moves from a first moment of political articulation to a second moment of political differentiation and fragmentation that redefines political boundaries in a process of renewal of political settlements. The argument is organised in seven chapters. Chapter 1 contributes a thorough exploration of the main agents involved: the indigenous movement and the government of Rafael Correa. It argued that the rise of *Buen Vivir* in

institutional politics is the result of the confluence of these two forces, and that the drivers of this change can be traced in their organisational, political and cultural history. It shows (i) the process of construction of their political subjectivities; (ii) that indigenous populations did not exist passively outside the political processes but contributed to shape processes of national development; and (iii) how the rise of *Buen Vivir* in institutional politics cannot be thought of without the articulation of these two main forces.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the discussion, on the one hand, of the main approaches to social organisation and, on the other hand, to literature on the State, its main role and responsibilities, as well as its specificities in the Latin American context. I particularly argue in favour of the (selective and pragmatic) application of the approach developed by Tilly and Tarrow called Political Process, which brings together social movements and the State. I acknowledge the importance of the proposals put forward by the decoloniality approach, which shed light on alternative epistemologies and ontologies that are typically excluded due to the dominance of modernist and colonialist logics. However, I point to the limitations of this perspective, which can obscure the understanding of the indigenous movement as a highly organised political and social agent and its role in contemporary Ecuador. Finally, I set up the main conceptual coordinates for understanding the specificities of the State in Latin America.

Chapter 3 contributes to making explicit how epistemological concerns regarding the political agency of constituencies in contemporary Ecuador have shaped the methods I chose, as well as my position as a researcher. It explained the decisions made about the design of the qualitative research approach.

Chapter 4 deals with the rationalisation and the strategic use of *Buen Vivir* to create differentiations between different political forces (primarily the indigenous movement and the government). In this chapter, a number of definitions are identified, stressing and highlighting different aspects according to the interests, goals, and visions of the actors supporting them. The analysis of competing frames shows not only that there is not one homogenous, monolithic and essentialising notion of *Buen Vivir*, but that it is constructed and re-constructed in the process of power struggles between different forces.

Chapter 5 identifies the effects that the emergence of *Buen Vivir* in the political realm has had on the organisation of contentious politics in Ecuador in order to impose a particular understanding on *Buen Vivir*. The focus is centred on the mobilising structure of the indigenous movement and the government. The chapter discusses the importance of leadership within these two competing sectors. It also discusses the strategies and tactical repertoires deployed by these two forces since the Constituent Assembly was established in order to show how they are competing for the same resources, but not willing to cooperate in a conjunct project, which is leading to the stagnation of the transformative potential represented by the idea of *Buen Vivir*.

Chapter 6 analyses the institutional impact the struggle over the ownership of *Buen Vivir* has had since its incorporation into the national Constitution. First, it draws the two projects related to the State and social agents in order to define the dynamic of social transformation in contemporary Ecuador involving active tensions between political structure (State) and insubordination (social movements). The one related to the definition of the State is called the *State of Buen Vivir*. The other, related to the positions, actions and participation of socially and politically organised agents in processes of societal transformation, is called the *Social Movement of Buen Vivir*. It is argued that these two projects function as the organising axes of the Political Process of *Buen Vivir*.

In relation to the mainstreaming of *Buen Vivir* at State level, two factors are analysed. The first one is related to the role played by the State in welfare provision. The second element is related to Ecuador's extractive activities. The analysis indicates that these two factors have allowed the government's definition of *Buen Vivir* to become dominant at State level. It also indicates a concentration of power in the State that, it is argued, is not accompanied by inclusive processes of empowerment and political participation. These two elements lie at the very heart of the conflict between the State and the indigenous movement. The final part of the chapter discussed how this conflict has helped to shape a particular form of post-neoliberalism in Ecuador at the expense of other alternatives.

Finally, Chapter 7 summarises the main findings of this thesis and their implications for the understanding of the relationship between social movements and the State in contexts of political change.

1

Contentious Politics and the Making of *Buen Vivir* in Contemporary Ecuador

...an ever-present fear exists, both within the movements as well as among political elites, of seeing them as under the control of someone else's agenda. When the right takes such a position it becomes a way to discredit a movement, but when indigenous activists believe this charge it also has the intended consequence of weakening and undermining their efforts
Becker, 2011: 311

Introduction

This chapter has two main objectives. The first one is to explore the historical context that explains the emergence of *Buen Vivir* in politics. Chapter 1 traces the making of the indigenous movement as well as the rise of Rafael Correa and *Alianza Pais* to power in order to start the work of reconstructing the competing understandings on *Buen Vivir* and their evolution. In doing so, it is possible to explain how discourses about *Buen Vivir* were developed, as well as how historical demands are encompassed in them. It is argued that the rise of *Buen Vivir* in institutional politics is the result of the confluence of these two forces, and the drivers of this change have to be traced in their organisational, political and cultural history. In doing so, I aim to expose (i) the process of construction of their political subjectivities; (ii) that indigenous populations did not exist passively outside the political processes but contributed to shaping processes of national development; and (iii) how the rise of *Buen Vivir* in institutional politics cannot be considered without the articulation of these two main forces.

The second objective is to analyse the definitions of *Buen Vivir* / *Sumak Kawsay* (Kichwa) as elaborated after *Buen Vivir's* inclusion in the national Constitution (2008). I divide the publications on *Buen Vivir* into two clusters. The first cluster of publications⁷

⁷ Acosta (2008); Medina (2008); Tortosa (2009); Fernandez (2009); Albó (2009); Hernandez (2009); Gudynas (2009); Chiroque Solano and Mutuberria Lazarini (2009); Salgado (2010); Walsh (2010).

(from approximately 2008 to 2010) reflects the novelty and the radical otherness of this idea that draws on indigenous philosophy. The publications outline the proposals of change arising from *Buen Vivir* and the importance of its unprecedented inclusion in legal and policy documents. Most of these publications follow the reasoning proposed by the cluster of authors working from the so called modernity / coloniality approach. The emergence of *Buen Vivir* makes apparent the significance of alternative knowledges in the production of political discourses, as well as making visible the political relevance of agents such as the indigenous movement. This production coming from the South demands a critical review of the dominant knowledge on the matter, which has origins rooted in the North (Europe and the US). The dominance of frameworks coming from the North have to a great extent excluded alternative understandings of social transformation, as the ones proposed by the modernity / coloniality approach. The contribution of this approach, as well as its particular limitations, are analysed in this chapter.

However, I argue that although important for the presentation of an idea that aims to break with a capitalist and modernist dominant logic, the main flaw of these works is that they put forward a unified and essentialising understanding of *Buen Vivir*. This essentialising understanding of *Buen Vivir* refers to its definition as fundamentally indigenous, holding radical distinctive values and primordial purity. Little consideration is paid to the organisational, political and cultural history of those agents responsible for the mobilisation of this new idea. It becomes apparent that there is a gap between, on the one hand, the discourse of *Buen Vivir* as defined by these first publications, and on the other, the practices, materialities and agency of the actors involved.

In contrast to the publications mentioned above, which were only centred on philosophical and legal definitions of *Buen Vivir*, the second cluster of publications has moved the debate on the matter to acknowledge the existence of competing understandings of it (Cortez, 2010; 2011; Radcliffe, 2012; Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara, 2014; Gudynas, 2014; Oviedo, 2014; Viola Recasens, 2014). This thesis builds upon these studies and adds the sociological analysis missing from them. This cluster of publications avoids essentialising the concept of *Buen Vivir* by presenting a typology of definitions. My contribution is based on the socio-political analysis on the stakeholders supporting and using them arguing that the discourses on *Buen Vivir* cannot be thought

of independently from the actors who support them. It is argued here that the political process is in constant transformation due to the practices of agents who define and negotiate their political and subjective positions in the process. I argue that both an essentialising and a decontextualised understanding of *Buen Vivir* neglect the nuances and the dynamic of a political process defined in relation to the rationalisation of *Buen Vivir*, which in turn determines its ‘use’ in relation to gaining access to power in Ecuador.

1.1 Mapping indigenous peoples and nationalities of Ecuador

In 1986 the UN Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities defined the term ‘indigenous’ as follow:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, considered themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present nondominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems (United Nations, 1986, para. 379).

In 1989 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169 was passed. This convention elaborated and passed what is today the most important international law on indigenous rights. In 1998 Ecuador reformed its national Constitution ratifying ILO Convention 169 (Van Cott, 2005). With it, and for the first time in its history, Ecuadorian *pueblos y nacionalidades* were legally recognised.

However, it was not until 2001 that Ecuador incorporated ethnicity into the national census. According to the 2010 census⁸, the proportion of the total population self-identified as indigenous is 7 per cent, whereas 77 per cent identified themselves as *mestizo* (a category denoting the mixture of white and indigenous identities). In sharp contrast, CONAIE - the largest indigenous organisation in Ecuador - claims that the percentage of the indigenous population is 45 per cent⁹. The reasons for such a disparity can be traced to the dynamic construction of identity markers and the power relations underpinning such a construction (Kuper, 2005; Canessa, 2007). As will be explained in the following section, colonial domination imposed an ‘Indian tribute’ during the early

⁸ According to the 2010 National Census, the total population in Ecuador is 14.483.499. The percentage of people self-identifying as Montubio is 7.4%; as Afro-descendant is 7.2%; as White is 6.1%; and as Other is 0.4% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos- INEC- <http://www.inec.gob.ec/inec/>) [Accessed August 2012].

⁹ <http://www.conaie.org/> [Accessed August 2012].

stages of the Ecuadorian modern state. Indigenous people were not only treated as slave labour but were forced to pay a tax due to their ‘ethnic status’. Becoming a *mestizo* therefore entailed fewer economic burdens as well as greater social possibilities. With the Liberal Revolution of 1895, *mestizaje* was legitimated and incorporated into the narrative of national identity (Roitman, 2008: 3-4), and *mestizos* were perceived as acculturated indigenous peoples.

Ecuador is divided into three main geographical regions: coast (lowlands), Andean highlands and the Amazon. Indigenous groups are divided following the same geographical distribution. From the total indigenous population, 78 per cent live in rural areas. The geographical place in which each indigenous community is located has functioned as a powerful factor, not only in the construction of their identity as peoples from the highlands, the Amazon and the coast, but also in their political organisation (Table 1).

Table 1: Mapping Indigenous Population

<i>Largest Indigenous Groups</i>	Highlands: Quichua [Kichwa] (85-90% of total Indian population) Lowlands: Shuar, Quichua [Kichwa] (10 smaller groups)
<i>Non-Indian Elite Regional Cleavages</i>	Coast (Guayaquil) / Highland (Quito)
<i>Indian Regional Cleavages</i>	Lowlands / Highlands (Coastal groups weak)
<i>Timing of Indigenous Political Organising</i>	1. Lowlands (1960s) 2. Highlands (1970s) 3. National (1980s)

Source: Lucero 2008: 12.

Indigenous groups identify themselves and are legally recognised according to two interrelated categories: *nacionalidades* (nationalities) and *pueblos* (peoples)¹⁰. There are 14 *nacionalidades* and 18 *pueblos* in Ecuador¹¹. *Nacionalidad* refers to the legal recognition of a territory (nation) with distinctive institutional, social, economic, legal and political forms of organisation. *Pueblo* refers to subgroups of collectives or communities sharing the same language and/or cultural costumes. One nationality usually encompasses several *pueblos*. The largest *nacionalidad* in Ecuador is Kichwa (or Quichua) which is located in the highlands. As will be explained later, indigenous peoples' demands to be recognised as both *pueblos* and *nacionalidades* correspond, on the one hand, to their political strategy to be closely connected with local spaces (*pueblos*), and on the other hand, being recognised as *nacionalidades* which is intrinsically related to the indigenous political project: *Plurinacionalidad*, or, the acknowledgement of Ecuador as a plurinational country (Lucero, 2003; Zamosc, 2004; Radcliffe, 2012).

1.1.2 The “Indian”¹² Question

...the Indigenous problem was one of class in the sense that it was a result of the agricultural exploitation of rural populations that were overwhelmingly ethnically Indian. It was this double exploitation that placed them at a particular disadvantage.
Becker, 2008:15

As in the rest of America, indigenous history in Ecuador has been marked by long-lasting oppression and marginalisation. European colonization meant for these groups brutal domination and exclusion from an incipient model of society organised on the basis of modern epistemologies. During colonial rule they were labelled as *Indios* (“Indians”). A derogatory term to homogenise already enslaved ethnic groups and at the same time to mark a clear division between the Spanish and the *criollo* (Creole). This homogenising

¹⁰ Even though Ecuador was not declared a plurinational country as demanded by indigenous organisations, the constitutional reform of 1998 recognised for the first time the existence of indigenous *nacionalidades* and *pueblos*.

¹¹ 14 *nacionalidades*: Andoa, Awa, Siona, Espera, Chachi, Secoya, Shiwiari, Achuar, Huaorani, Zápara, Tsachila, Shuar, Kichwa Amazonia, Cofán.
18 *pueblos*: Huancavilca, Manta, Palta, Saraguro, Kañari, Pastos, Puruwa, Waranka, Kitu Kara, Salasaka, Panzaleo, Kisapincha, Chibuleo, Kayambi, Otavalo, Natabuela, Karanki, Tomabela
(<http://www.codenpe.gob.ec/>) [Accessed August 2012].

¹² The term ‘Indian’ (*Indio*) refers to the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the ‘new continent’ in 1492. Convinced that going to the West would be a faster route to get to the East Indies, Columbus arrived at what later was called the Americas. Without truly admitting the arrival at a different destination Columbus named its original inhabitants ‘Indians’.

model of exclusion continued after independence from Spain in 1822¹³ and throughout the republican period. Inhabiting mainly rural areas, indigenous peoples were dispossessed of their lands, used as cheap labour, forced to pay tributes (the Indian tribute), and their values and customs were socially and culturally neglected (Lucero 2008; Harten, 2011). Used in a derogatory way for centuries, the term “Indian” has been with time appropriated and its meaning subverted by indigenous peoples (Albó, 1991).

Paradoxically, “Indians” received much more legislative attention¹⁴ than other minority groups (afro-descendants for instance) who sat at the bottom of the racial pyramid (Roitman, 2008:3). In fact, indigenous populations did not exist passively outside of the political processes but contributed into shaping processes of national development (Becker, 2008). During colonial rule, indigenous *levantamientos* (uprisings) against colonial authorities, tribute payments and labour exploitation forced the abolition of abusive labour systems. After independence, protests carried on against a regime that continued to exclude indigenous peoples. The 1920s and 1930s witnessed the emergence of syndicates in Ecuador, which were crucial to the consolidation of indigenous organisations and their forms of protest. Scholars studying indigenous movements in Latin America argue that their history should be thought of as intrinsically linked to the history of land¹⁵. In this sense, it can be argued that what today is called ‘indigenous politics’ (Yashar, 1998; Brysk, 2000; Radcliffe, 2001; Van Cott, 2005) cannot be separated from forms of peasant politics. In other words, the emergence and development of indigenous movements cannot be explained only in terms of the politicization of ethnic or cultural cleavages but are equally as important as class and popular struggles.

...Ecuador reveals a different story: Indian struggles have not been limited to cultural affirmation or the securing of ethnic rights. While these goals have been important, the Indian movement has transcended them, involving itself in broader battles over social issues and becoming a player in the contest for political power (Zamosc, 2004: 132).

¹³ After independence from Spain, Ecuador became part of Great Colombia, from which it gained independence in 1830.

¹⁴ *Reforma de la Ley de Jornaleros* (1918- Reform of the Day Labourer Law) and *Ley de Comunas* (1937- Communes Law) are some examples of the agrarian legislation through which the State tried to regulate the Indian problem (Becker, 2008).

¹⁵ Bebbington, 2000; Rubenstein, 2001; Lucero, 2003, 2006; Perreault, 2003; Postero and Zamosc, 2004; Becker, 2008, 2011; Schaefer, 2009; Postero, 2010.

In this sense, the ‘Indian question’ is not only a cultural one but also an economic and political one (Schaefer, 2009). Lucero (2003) explains that the *hacienda* (landed estate) systems during colonial and republican regimes, as well as the agrarian reforms taking place in the 1960s and 1970s, are at the foundation of contemporary indigenous movements:

Agrarian reforms helped move the ‘Indian problem’ from the semiprivate sphere of ethnic administration to a national public sphere in which national development plans were debated and nationwide protests were planned. In the 1990s...concerns over the land were no longer restricted to familiar ones of subsistence and production...but also linked to political questions of the autonomy of indigenous ‘territories’ (Lucero, 2003: 26-27).

Acknowledging the importance that both *class* (peasant struggle) and *identity* (indigenous struggle) have in relation to the ‘Indian question’, the role that these two factors have played in the organisation of indigenous political action will be examined in the next section.

1.2 The Making of Modern Indigenous Social Movements in Ecuador

...in the Ecuador of the 1930s and 1940s, an autonomous Indian project was literally unthinkable. This would only become publicly thinkable, rupturing widespread images of Ecuadorian Indians as passive elements of the nation, in the 1990s
Lucero, 2003: 31.

Some scholars (Glave, 1999; Gerlach, 2003) consider that the origins of modern¹⁶ indigenous movements in Ecuador are located in the 1980s with the formation of what is in their view the first truly indigenous organisation, CONAIE. Undoubtedly the formation of such an organisation constitutes a milestone in the history of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement. However, other authors argue that the roots of this movement have to be traced back further than the 1980s (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta, 2003; Lucero, 2003; Becker, 2008; Simbaña, 2009). Following the arguments of the latter group, I divide the emergence and development of the indigenous movement into three periods. Each period is constructed upon the specific interaction of four fundamental factors: (i) different political openings to collective action; (ii) specific national, regional and international contexts; (iii) ways of framing collective action; and (iv) organisational forms. Whilst every periodization of history is arbitrary, I aim with this division to show, first, how the dynamic inter-relation of these factors has affected the organisational

¹⁶ By ‘modern’ I refer to present or recent times.

processes of indigenous movements in Ecuador; and second, how the demands elaborated in these periods are fundamentally connected and included in the definition of *Sumak Kawsay* currently mobilised by the movement (Chapter 4). The articulation of these factors at a particular point in time shaped different processes, which in turn influenced the development of the modern indigenous movement in Ecuador.

This section is therefore divided into three parts, each corresponding to a specific historical period:

1. from the 1930s to the first agrarian reform in 1964: *From Huasipungueros to Peasants*;
2. from the 1964 agrarian reform to 1990: *Formalising Collective Action: the return of the “Indian”*;
3. from 1990 up to the present time: *Neoliberal times, leadership and crises*

1.2.1 From *Huasipungueros*¹⁷ to Peasants (1930-1964)

Following independence from Spain in 1822 and from Gran Colombia in 1830, and the foundation of Ecuador as a Republic, the communitarian forms of collective property legally disappeared. According to the first national Constitution (1830), every individual living on Ecuadorian soil could be considered a full citizen if they were legally and financially independent; owned estates valued at 3000 *pesos* minimum; and could read and write in Spanish, even if at that time 85 per cent of the population only spoke Kichwa (Simbaña, 2009). Indigenous peoples, afro-descendants and women did not fulfil any of these requirements and therefore did not enjoy civil and political rights. Their legal representation was taken either by landowners or the church.

The economy of the country was primarily based on agrarian production (exporting mainly cocoa and coffee, with the United States as the principal destination), and the main model of development was the *hacienda* system, under which land as well as economic and political power were concentrated in the hands of the agrarian elite or *hacendados*. In this context, indigenous peoples were integrated into the economy as

¹⁷ *Huasipungo* (*concertaje* in Spanish) is the Kichwa word referring to the servile relationship between the owner of the *hacienda* (landed estate; also called *latifundio*) and “Indians”. The latter were granted a salary and a piece of land on the *hacienda* but only by contracting a debt for life with the landowner. In this way, indigenous peoples became *huasipungueros* (Becker, 2008).

huasipungueros. The republican system and the Liberal Revolution led by Eloy Alfaro (1895), however, did not change the main colonial institutions of domination and exploitation of indigenous peoples. *Huasipungos* were only formally abolished by establishing a minimum wage. Local landowners increased their power by becoming the political leaders of cantons¹⁸ and *parroquias* (civil parishes), increasing in turn the presence of the State locally. According to Lucero (2003), the *hacienda* became “a political institution that provided the incipient Ecuadorian state with the answer to a vexing problem: how to keep a colonial political economy functioning in ostensibly republican and liberal times” (2003: 26).

During this period the main authority to be challenged by indigenous peasants were the landowners and the system of *haciendas*. The ‘feudal’ elite (located in the highlands) faced both increasing rural conflicts and the emergence of export-sector elites on the coast who not only challenged feudal political power but also demanded the modernisation of the economy. By the end of the 19th century there were two economically and politically powerful elites: one located in the coastal areas (export-sector) and one in the highlands (landed class) (Figuerola, 1996-1997). The modernisation of the economy required the liberation of *indios* from the haciendas. Free *indios* would then be available to be employed as cheap labour in coastal industries¹⁹. Coastal elites became, therefore, staunch ‘defenders’ of the indigenous populations, promoting legislative protection for them (the 1937 *Ley de Comunas*²⁰, for example) (Clark, 1997).

There were several crude indigenous *levantamientos*²¹ in this period, but it was not until the 1920s and mainly the 1930s that collective action started to be more systematically organised, as indigenous *huasipungueros* forged alliances with leftist parties and agricultural trade unions²². Their first and biggest ally was the *Partido Socialista*

¹⁸ Ecuador is administratively divided in 24 provinces subdivided in 226 cantons, which are in turn divided into 1500 parishes.

¹⁹ This led to a demographic shift: indigenous *huasipungueros* moved to a predominantly *mestizo* coastal area.

²⁰ The *Ley de Comunas* (Communes Law) recognised the legal existence of communities (they had to be formed by at least 50 people). Communities were allowed to have their own form of political (*cabildos*) and economic organisation (cooperatives). Even though the recognition of the *comunidades* implied a more autonomous existence for indigenous peoples, communities remained under the control of the state (Lucero, 2003; Van Cott, 2005).

²¹ Until the 1920s most indigenous uprisings were locally confined: within *haciendas* and against landowners and/or church representatives.

²² The first workers’ uprising in Ecuador was in 1922.

*Ecuadoriano*²³ (PSE, Ecuadorian Socialist Party). The first indigenous-peasant trade unions were formed in 1926. The PSE welcomed indigenous leaders starting a long (and sometimes troubled) relationship between rural communities and urban activists. The joint struggle was mainly triggered by concrete and immediate demands: better working and living conditions, abolition of imprisonment for debts, abolition of *huasipungos* and *huasicamias*²⁴, and direct cash payment. Strikes (back then a new form of protest for indigenous groups) and violent mass protests appeared throughout Ecuador especially in the highland areas (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta, 2003). The unrest was increased by the fall of international prices of raw materials, throwing the national economy into depression in the 1930s.

Sawyer (2004: 87) notices that ‘...there was nothing inevitable about an indigenous politics of opposition; it had to be produced’. Jesús Gualavisí, Dolores Cacuango and Tránsito Amaguaña became important indigenous leaders (and with time, national figures) in close connection with the Ecuadorian Communist Party. As Foweraker (1993) and Sawyer (2004) explain, it was the class element that gave the indigenous struggle its strength and organisation. However, Ramos (2003) argues that, although the joint struggle brought together Marxist activists and indigenous peasants, neither class nor ethnic identity completely merged into the other. Over time, the indigenous movement strategically stressed one or the other.

In May 1944 a massive popular uprising (known as the May Revolution) overthrew the president Arroyo del Río, 1940-1944. In that same year, two organisations, crucial for the cohesion of urban workers and indigenous-peasant movements, were founded: the *Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador* (CTE - Confederation of Ecuadorian Workers) and the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (FEI - Ecuadorian Federation of Indians). By this time indigenous demands were not only related to work conditions but went beyond the *haciendas*. They principally claimed economic emancipation, land reform, and political and social rights (Becker, 2008). Powerful rural uprisings followed the May Revolution in a period of relative political stability in Ecuador (three democratic governments took power between 1948 and 1960). In this context, both the FEI and the

²³ The PSE was formed in 1925 after the *Revolución Juliana* (July Revolution).

²⁴ *Huasicamias*: the Kichwa word referring to the compulsory domestic service of *huasipungueros*’ wives and daughters in the *haciendas*.

CTE consolidated their positions. Both organisations organised several conferences in which participants designed the document of their agrarian reform proposal. This proposal included demands specific to indigenous peoples (the recognition of Kichwa as an official language, for instance). Large-scale mobilisations coordinated by both FEI and CTE in December 1961 and August 1962 pressured the government to approve the agrarian reform.

1.2.2 Formalising Collective Action: the return of the “Indian” (1964-1990)

Through organizational and agitational activity, indigenous organizations like CONAIE succeeded in changing the political culture of Ecuador from one in which Indians literally had to ride in the back of the buses to a pluricultural one in which Indians occupy public office at every level
Lucero, 2001: 67.

In 1963 a military coup overthrew president Arosemena (1961-1963) and installed a military junta. In 1964 and by decree²⁵, the junta (1963-1966) passed the *Ley de Reforma Agraria y Colonización* (Agrarian Reform and Colonization Law). In this context, leftist parties and trade unions were silenced. The agrarian reform was a top-down program mainly benefiting agrarian capitalists. Whilst the *hacienda* system was abolished, the land tenure system was not affected. The land distributed among indigenous-peasants was mainly owned by the State and was of low quality with no access to irrigation. Authors such as Barsky (1988) and Simbaña (2009) argue that the 1964 agrarian reform did not aim to democratise land, but to modernise the agrarian production system in order to insert Ecuadorian products in increasingly competitive international markets. Secondly, it aimed to provide institutional channels to control escalating rural conflicts²⁶.

Nonetheless, with the agrarian reform, indigenous peasants were free of the *huasipungo* system and for the first time, became owners of land which they organised according to their communal customs (Zamosc and Postero, 2004). *Land* became the focal point around which different indigenous communities built cultural, social and political cohesion. By the 1970s the indigenous movement started changing strategies and

²⁵ The second agrarian reform was also decreed by a military government in 1973. This time indigenous peoples' needs were completely neglected. Rodríguez Lara, the dictator in power, claimed “There is no more Indian problem... We all become white when we accept the goals of the national culture” (Whitten, 1976; cited in Becker, 2008: 142-143).

²⁶ After the Cuban revolution (1959), Kennedy's government implemented the Alliance for Progress program. Ecuador was one of the eleven countries to implement agrarian reforms under this program (Becker, 2008).

discourse, highlighting in particular their ethnic identity. Jesuit anthropologist Xavier Albó (1991) names this phase as ‘the return of the Indian’.

Ending the hacienda system forced racism into the public arena, thus leading to heightened political mobilizations. New issues gained dominance, including a defence of native cultures and languages...Growing educational and economic opportunities provided Indigenous peoples with less incentive to discard their ethnic identities (Becker, 2008: 145).

In turn, the 1970s witnessed the transformation of the national model of development from agrarian production to import-substitution industrialization strategies (ISI). In brief, the ISI model was based on state-led development, which focused firstly on the expansion and modernization of the internal market via local production, and secondly on the creation of state-owned enterprises in control, in the case of Ecuador, of the natural resources, both primary goods (cocoa, coffee, bananas) and non-renewable goods (oil) (SENPLADES, 2010; Kingstone, 2011). In 1967 the first significant petroleum reserve in Amazonian territory was discovered. Since then, the Ecuadorian economy has been primarily based on extractive activities. As a petro-nation, Ecuador attracted foreign investment, and several multinational companies began operations in the country.

By 1970 – three years after the discovery of the first significant oilfield – some thirty concessions comprising nearly ten million hectares were granted throughout the Ecuadorian Amazon, attracting heavy investment from multiple hydrocarbon exploration and production companies (Perreault and Valdivia, 2010: 692).

However, during the 1970s, national debate centred on the ownership of such resources. Increasing foreign investments triggered unrest within the nationalist sector leading to the 1972 military coup²⁷. The military government in power²⁸ declared natural resources *patrimonio nacional* (national property), reviewed contracts with private companies, and created the Ecuadorian Petroleum State Corporation (Perrault and Valdivia, 2010). The first national refinery – *Refinería Estatal Esmeraldas* – was opened in 1977. The ISI model led, first, to a period of rapid economic growth in urban areas, and second, to the rise of an urban middle and working class. National governments used petro-dollars to finance health and educational programmes, subsidies and tax controls, benefiting urban classes. These transformations sharpened social and economic inequalities between rural

²⁷ Constitutionally elected president Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra (1968-1972) was overthrown and replaced by General Rodriguez Lara (1972-1976). Velasco Ibarra was elected to the presidency five times: 1934-1935; 1944-1947; 1952-1956; 1960-1961; 1968-1972. He never completed a full term of presidency (Gerlach, 2003).

²⁸ It is important to remark here that, unlike many dictatorships in Latin American countries, military governments in Ecuador carried out progressive and non-violent reforms (Andolina, 2003).

and urban sectors. The exclusionary dynamic opened up by the new model of development, however, was not only based on geographical divisions (urban/rural), but also on gender, race and ethnicity (Schech and Haggis, 2000).

It is in this context that most of Ecuador's indigenous organisations were founded. In 1972 ECUARUNARI (*Confederacion de Pueblos de la Nacionalidad Kichwa del Ecuador* – Confederation of Peoples of Kichwa Nationality) was established. The unrest following the agrarian reforms, the persistence of structural economic and social problems, and escalating tensions within the FEI between indigenous leaders and members of the Ecuadorian Communist Party, led indigenous groups to seek new alliances (Simbaña, 2009). Pallares (2002: 152) explains that 'ECUARUNARI distinguished itself from other *campesino* (peasant) organizations by stressing the need to combat racial and cultural discrimination and by allowing indigenous leaders to serve in top leadership positions'. The creation of this new organisation which attracted indigenous *pueblos* from the Andean highlands was the result of the convergence of three political and organisational forces:

- 1) New forms of organisation sponsored by leftist parties (Ecuadorian Socialist and Communist Parties) such as the *Movimiento Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* (MRT – Revolutionary Workers Movement) and *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MIR – Revolutionary Left Movement). These organisations emerged mainly in the *sierra* (highlands) and on the coast.
- 2) Organisations linked to progressive sectors of the Catholic Church (associated with the Liberation Theology movement).
- 3) Autonomous processes of political organisation within indigenous communities.

In 1968, with the help of the Catholic Church and the peasant movement, another peasant-indigenous federation was organised in the highlands: FENOC (National Federation of Peasant Organisations). The organisation's leaders stressed from the very beginning that their exploitation was based on both class and ethnic status, and worked mainly with rural communities demanding agrarian reform. The organisation grew at a national level, having strong connections with La Via Campesina²⁹. Finally, in 1999, it adopted the name FENOCIN – *Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas*

²⁹ La Via Campesina is an international peasant movement founded in 1993.

Indigenas y Negras (National Confederation of Indigenous, Peasant, and Black Organisations) to emphasise that it is the only federation in Ecuador representing indigenous, peasants and black peoples (Becker, 2008).

In 1980, with the financial support of international Evangelical organisations, FEINE (*Federación Ecuatoriana de Indigenas Evangélicos* – Ecuadorian Federation of Evangelical Indigenous) was founded. Lucero explains that

[a] history of abuse on the part of *hacendados* and the traditional Catholic clergy made Evangelicalism seem like a promising option for many former *huasipungueros* hacienda workers...the translation of the Bible in the 1950s and the start of Quichua radio broadcast in the 1960s made the conversion to Protestantism a viable avenue to defend an *indigenous* cultural identity (Lucero, 2006: 36-37; italics in the original).

Currently, FEINE represents 5000 churches in Ecuador and 2.5 million indigenous Evangelicals located mostly in the highland area.

In 1980, a regional congress attended by the representatives of the different indigenous *pueblos* (peoples) was organised. The result was the foundation of CONFENIAE (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* – Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon), which brings together indigenous *pueblos* and *nacionalidades* from the Amazon. The relation between ECUARUNARI and CONFENIAE was further consolidated via the exchange of resources, mutual support in demonstrations, and the organisation of workshops and congresses (Simbaña, 2009). From this relationship grew the idea of a national indigenous confederation that could unify the different indigenous organisations of Ecuador. In 1984 the *Consejo de Coordinación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*³⁰ (CONACNIE- National Coordinating Council of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) was formed. That same year the first regional indigenous organisation, COICA (*Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica* – Coordinator of Indigenous Organisations of the Amazon Basin) was founded. This organisation comprises nine indigenous organisations of the Amazon region³¹, including CONFENIAE from Ecuador.

³⁰ FEI and FENOCIN did not integrate into this organisation.

³¹ From Peru: AIDSEF (Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon); Guyana: APA (Association of Amerindian People); Bolivia: CIDOB (Confederation of Indigenous People of East and Amazon of Bolivia); Brazil: COIAB (Organisation Coordinator of Indigenous People of the Brazilian Amazon); French Guyana: FOAG (Federation of Autonomous Organisations of French Guyana); Surinam: OIS (Organisation of Indigenous of Surinam); Venezuela: ORPIA (Regional Organisation of Indigenous People of the Amazon); Colombia: OPIAC (Organisation of Indigenous People of the Colombian Amazon) <http://www.coica.org.ec/index.php/who-are-we/member-organizations> [Accessed May 2012]

Finally, in 1986 the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE - Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) was founded bringing together indigenous organisations from the Andean highlands, the Amazonian lowlands and the coast. Its member organisations are: ECUARUNARI (Highlands), CONFENIAE (Amazon) and CONAICE (Coast). CONAIE was formed as a distinctive indigenous organisation trying explicitly to differentiate itself from political parties (Andolina, 2003). Ethnic identity was placed at the core of its discourse, and its primary goal was to unify a fragmented indigenous population into one sole movement. In order to achieve such cohesion, CONAIE constructed a framework around the notion of *nacionalidades* (nationalities) (Jameson, 2011). Lucero (2003) and Becker (2008) point out that while indigenous groups could have organised under different concepts (*pueblos*, cooperatives, *comunas*, and so forth), it was *nacionalidades* which became the discursive vehicle for their political project; in other words, the acknowledgement of Ecuador as a Plurinational State. Radcliffe (2012: 244) explains that

[a]t its broadest, plurinationalism commits the state to a broader agenda than poverty alleviation, as it encompasses the recognition of indigenous and black territories and indigenous forms of justice, treating indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians as subjects of rights, granting citizenship to frontier populations, establishing SK [*Sumak Kawsay* – *Buen Vivir*] as the core development objective, and amplifying collective rights, strengthening intercultural education, and recognising Spanish, Kichwa and Shuar as official languages.

1.2.3 Neoliberal times, leadership and crises (from 1990 up to the present)

The 1980s and the return of democracy presented political and economic challenges. In relation to the political context, Ecuador has been characterised by a profound volatility. Like many Latin American countries, Ecuador has a long tradition of unstable (civil and military) governments. Traditional political parties³² have controlled the political scene since the return of democracy in 1979. Based on individual personalities, the political party system is highly fragmented, constructing its power mainly on clientelist practices (Postero and Zamosc, 2004; Van Cott, 2005; Machado Puertas, 2007; Prevost *et al.*, 2012). Traditional political parties, together with the National Congress and the Judicial System, have been discredited after various corruption scandals.

³² Ecuadorian traditional political parties: Partido Social Cristiano (PSC); Izquierda Democrática (ID); Democracia Popular – Unión Demócrata Cristiana (DP-UDC); Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano (PRE).

According to 1999 polling data, only 6 percent have faith in the Congress. Ecuador's multiparty system is one of the weakest in Latin America. Perhaps more disturbing only 28 percent of Ecuadorians believe that democracy is able to solve their problems (Lucero, 2001: 60).

In relation to the economic challenges of this period, there was a global fall in oil prices. On the other hand, the way by which national governments financed ISI strategies - printing money, borrowing abroad - led the economy to a state of hyper-inflation and growing debt. The debt crisis marked the end for the ISI model in Latin America, leading to profound institutional transformations and the beginning of the 'neoliberal turn' (Kingstone, 2011).

a) The neoliberal turn: defining neoliberalism

Harvey (2005) explains that

...neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (2005: 2)

Authors such as Castree (2006), Mudge (2008), Clarke (2008), and Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) argue that the term neoliberalism has a multidimensional nature and strong normative connotations. Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) and Venugopal (2015) follow the historical transformation of the term since first coined by the German Freiberg School in the 1930s until the present. The first use of neoliberalism between the 1930s and 1960s, mainly by economists, was to denote a new philosophy different to classic liberalism in its rejection of laissez-faire and the focus on humanistic values. From the 1980s onwards, after the Chicago School and the Chile's Chicago Boys, the meaning of the term started to expand. Since then, neoliberalism has been used not only to refer to a set of economic policies to deregulate markets, privatise and withdraw the State of the economic realm. It has also been applied to analyse broad social, political and cultural phenomena as long as is associated with free markets, for example, neoliberalism as a normative ideology or academic paradigm (explained below).

One consequence of this expansion has been that the meaning of the term has become ambiguous and contested. This contestation and the multiplicity of usages of the term to analyse different phenomena has led to the lack of a consistent and precise theoretical and empirical characterisation of what neoliberalism means. For this reason, Venugopal

(2015) questions the current analytical value of the term. Molyneux (2008) argues that neoliberalism is too broad and abstract a concept to explain dynamic, complex and concrete processes. The risk that the author perceives is given by the fact that

...totalizing conceptions of neoliberalism as imposing inexorable market logic with predetermined social and political outcomes, fail to capture the variant modalities, adaptations and indeed resistance to the global diffusion of the structural reforms (Molyneux, 2008: 775).

In addition, Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) show the uneven use of the term across ideological divides. Neoliberalism is rarely used positively. More frequently, it is used with a negative connotation by those authors who are critical to free market economy (Ferrero, 2014). Those in favour of the latter use different terminology, for example, consensus, adjustment and orthodoxy.

Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) distinguish four main patterns of usage of the term neoliberalism across a wide range of social science literature. According to their typology, neoliberalism is used to refer to a set of economic policies, a development model, a normative ideology, and an academic paradigm. These distinctive uses of the term neoliberalism are not exclusive as very often they overlap. The first use of the term refers to economic reform policies (Aminzade, 2003). Within these set of policies are encompassed those that liberalise the economy, those that reduce the role of the State in the economy, and those that contribute to fiscal austerity and macroeconomic stabilisation (Boas and Gans-Morse, 2009: 143). The second use of neoliberalism denotes a development model, that is, this definition gives the coordinates of how the economy and society will be organised. As a development strategy neoliberalism defines recipes for modernisation, the role of labour, capital and the State. These prescriptions are included in a coherent political project guiding their implementation (Kurtz, 1999). The third use defines neoliberalism as ideology. At the core of this definition there are normative considerations of the role of individuals over collectivities as well as the primacy of individual freedom (Carruthers, 2001). Finally, the use of neoliberalism to refer to an academic paradigm 'consists of positive assumptions about how markets operate' (Boas and Gans-Morse, 2009: 144). In this sense, producers and consumers are thought to behave rationally and efficiently to correct market signals (Brohman, 1995).

The implementation of neoliberal policies in Latin America has also been assessed in different ways. Margheritis and Pereira (2007) note that appraisals significantly differ according to which facts are taken into consideration (see Biersteker, 1992; Huber and Solt, 2004; and Walton, 2004). Scholars such as Haarstad and Anderson (2009) argue that, in macroeconomic terms, these transformations were necessary to first, control inflation and second, to attract foreign investment in order to improve the relationship between national economies and global markets. Scholars such as Yashar (1999), Sieder (2002), Van Cott (2005), Kohl and Farthing (2009), Escobar (2010), and Harten (2011), agree in conceiving neoliberalism as a framework for macroeconomic and State reforms with dire social and economic consequences.

In the case of Ecuador, the meaning of neoliberalism has been strategically fixed in one understanding of the term. Many authors analysing the shape neoliberalism has taken in the country, all of them critical to it (Silva, 2016; Mazzolini, 2015; Arsel, 2012; Andolina *et al*, 2009; Lucero, 2003; Acosta, 2002), agree in conceiving it as a set of economic policies mainly identified with the Washington Consensus. In this sense, neoliberalism in Ecuador has been defined as a set of macroeconomic policies ‘through which the political economy came into a forced alignment around market democratization, the withdrawal of the state from service sectors, trade liberalization, and the codification of a high-liberal property-rights regime that extended legal inequalities into new areas like intellectual property and biogenetics’ (Goodale and Postero, 2013: 2). As it will be shown in following chapters, the agents under study in this thesis, both the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa, replicate this understanding of the term. Neoliberal policies are negatively evaluated due to the role given to the State primarily in the economic realm, and due to their dire social and economic consequences. As further explained below, one aspect that is positively assessed is the opening of spaces for deliberation and political organisation happened during the 1990s. This aspect is connected to Molyneux (2008) explanation of the two phases of the neoliberal turn.

Molyneux (2008) divides the ‘neoliberal turn’ and the consequent transformations which took place in Latin America, into two phases: *market fundamentalism* and *reactive neoliberalism*. The first phase started in the 1970s and was dominated by structural adjustments attached to loans, the retreat of the State, privatizations of public assets and

a list of austerity measures, which involved cuts in social investments. In Ecuador, the Ecuadorian Petroleum State Corporation was re-structured as Petroecuador in 1989, and came directly under the control of private companies. In this period, the Ecuadorian national debt went from US\$324 million to US\$8.4 billion (Davidov, 2012: 13).

The Ecuadorian government facilitated... penetration into the national soil, as it auctioned off oil block concessions to foreign oil companies. Beyond oil, World Bank-sponsored initiatives... pressured the Ecuadorian state to locate, map, and open up to investment new sectors of extractable natural resources (Davidov, 2012: 13).

Economic policies were implemented with little consideration for social costs (Abouharb and Cingranelli, 2006). Following the recipes established by the Washington Consensus and Structural Adjustments Programmes - both designed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and agreed by national governments - Latin America became part of what Mignolo (2005) calls the neoliberal global order. By the end of the 1980s, poverty proved to be not a transitional phenomenon as many experts from the World Bank considered it, but a structural problem that urgently needed to be addressed.

By 1990, 70 per cent of Ecuadorians lived below the poverty line (Postero and Zamosc, 2004). The 1995 World Bank's poverty assessment in Ecuador found a strong correlation between being indigenous and being poor (Van Nieuwkoop and Uquillas, 2000: 5). Social protests and international awareness of the social effects of economic policies led to the second phase of neoliberal policies described by Molyneux (2008) as reactive neoliberalism. The premise was to tackle social problems without affecting economic growth (Birdsall and de la Torre, 2001). Hence the post-Washington Consensus phase did not show substantive changes in macro-economic policies but introduced significant modifications to adjustments programmes: first, 'good governance' gave the State a place in development policy and planning; second, social policy recovered importance; and third, poverty became the principal problem to be addressed by social policies (Molyneux, 2008: 780).

If in the 1980s policy attention focused on 'getting the economy right', in the 1990s there were attempts to attend to the hitherto neglected social realm and to build appropriate institutions, all in a context of ever-deepening inequality... (Molyneux, 2008: 780).

Participation, empowerment, accountability, decentralization, ethnodevelopment, development with identity, and multiculturalism all form part of the new lexicon

dominating this phase³³ (Andolina *et al*, 2009; Pearce and Eade, 2000). The inclusion of these ideas into the dominant discourse can be thought of both as the result of their co-optation by the neoliberal discourse, and as a top-down attempt to deal with those challenges posed by social confrontation from below. During the 1980s there was a proliferation of local and international (mainly Northern) non-governmental organisations in the region (Petrás, 1997; Bebbington, 1997; Pearce, 2000).

Hale (2004) and Albó (2008) call the period of multicultural reforms *la era del Indio permitido*. The authors were referring to attempts to assimilate the impoverished indigenous population by granting them cultural and social rights. These attempts created a division between the ‘good Indians’ (those who accepted the terms and conditions of assimilation) and the ‘bad Indians’ (considered thenceforth as ‘radicals’).

The Indio permitido has passed the test of modernity, substituted ‘protest’ with ‘proposal’, and learned to be both authentic and fully conversant with the dominant milieu. Its Other is unruly, vindictive and conflict prone. These latter traits trouble elites who have pledged allegiance to cultural equality, seeding fears about what empowerment of these Other Indians would portend (Hale, 2004: 19).

These sets of neoliberal reforms also promoted the participation of ‘good Indians’ in municipal decision-making processes. Scholars such as Postero (2010) regard multicultural reforms as attempts at co-optation and fragmentation of indigenous movements: ‘[neoliberal multiculturalism] was a top-down effort by the neoliberal state to incorporate indigenous peoples into the national project as responsible and docile neoliberal subjects’ (2010: 22).

However, uprisings in Ecuador since the 1990s show that the neoliberal period in Latin America should be considered both as ‘lost and won’ decades. Lucero (2009) and Oxhorn (2009) argue that the neoliberal transformation not only imposed economic pressures on the population, but also opened spaces for political organisation. Indigenous movements found a revitalising impulse to rearticulate their demands and consolidate their organisation. Lucero notes that ‘the responses of Indigenous people to neoliberal projects have been complex and varied’ (2009: 66) implying both resistance and negotiation. It can be said that in the case of Ecuadorian indigenous movements, neoliberalism has simultaneously threatened and provided opportunities.

³³ The United Nations declared 1995-2004 the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples (Van Nieuwkoop and Uquillas, 2000).

b) Leadership

With CONAIE, the indigenous movement became the main protagonist and representative of the ‘anti-neoliberal’ struggle (Lucero, 2006; Yashar, 1999; Van Cott, 2005; Becker, 2008; Ospina Peralta, 2009). In 1990, the organisation led a nine-day nationwide uprising, blocking roads and cutting food supplies to the main cities. The main demands were for land, a new agrarian reform, and the recognition of nationalities and their cultural and political rights. Becker (2010: 292) explains that “...it represented the emergence of indigenous peoples as one of the most powerful social-movement actors in the Americas”. The massive 1990 roadblock was the first demonstration of power by indigenous organisations, which was followed by roadblocks and mobilizations in 1992³⁴, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2000 and 2001 (Van Cott, 2005).

As illustrated in Table 2, polling data showed that by 1999 Ecuadorians had more faith in CONAIE than in most of the traditional and dominant institutions (except from the church and the military). The frame of the struggle was constructed around the idea of a *plurinational State*. CONAIE articulated a discourse in which local, regional and national dimensions were intertwined and shaped by the idea of ‘indigenous nationalities’, which resulted in a discourse defending Ecuador as a plurinational country (Lucero, 2003). Andolina (2003) explains that

Drawing on beliefs about the positive aspects of pre-Columbian societies and contemporary criticisms of colonial rule expressed by anticolonial movements, indigenous organisations prioritised ethnic identities of ‘nationalities’ while retaining traditions of class and popular struggles. Indigenous movement ideology has operated around a principle of self-determination that seeks autonomy, access, and participation in social and political life (Andolina, 2003: 727)

³⁴ The 1992 march was linked to ‘500 years of Resistance’, a campaign against official celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the ‘discovery’ of the Americas (Andolina, 2003).

Table 2: Faith in Civil and Political Institutions (Percentages)

In which of the following institutions do you have the most faith?	
Church	28.44
Military	25.97
CONAIE	12.66
Government	2.66
Unions	2.30
Congress	0.94
Parties	0.78

Source: *El Hoy* (newspaper Quito, January 1999) quoted in Lucero, 2001: 65

The idea of *nacionalidades* facilitated the construction of alliances between indigenous and non-indigenous organisations (church, environmentalists, leftists and human rights organisations, among others). As a result, in 1994 the *Coordinadora Agraria* (Agrarian Coordinator) was formed and in 1995 the *Coordinadora de Movimientos Sociales* (Social Movements Coordinator). In this context, CONAIE became the main representative of the popular struggle demanding the creation of a Constituent Assembly. In the political project published in 1994, CONAIE explained the main goal of their struggle.

...is a frontal assault on the repressive national and international hegemonic economic, political, and ideological capitalistic system that hinders the self-determination and economic and political independence of Indigenous peoples and nationalities and other social sectors... The goal is the transformation of the nature of the current power of the hegemonic uni-national state that is exclusionary, anti-democratic, and repressive...activist would construct a humanistic, plurinational new society (CONAIE *Proyecto Politico*, 1994; quoted in Becker, 2008: 193)

In 1994 (during the presidency of Durán Ballén 1992-1996) a new agrarian reform law was passed. CONAIE rejected its content, demanding popular participation in the process. It called for a new national *levantamiento* and road-blocks in the main cities of Ecuador. The result of the struggle was the constitution of a special commission (half of its members were indigenous representatives), and finally, the reform of the law. CONAIE achieved ‘credit for small farmers who produce for the local market, state control of water resources, development of indigenous agricultural knowledge, and a two-thirds majority vote requirement for indigenous people to sell their community land’ (Andolina, 2003: 729-730).

In 1996 CONAIE and the *Coordinadora de Movimientos Sociales* formed their own political party: the *Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik - Nuevo Pais* (MUPP-NP, *Pachakutik* Movement for Plurinational Unity – New Country). *Pachakutik* marked the entry of indigenous peoples into electoral politics. By this time, CONAIE and *Pachakutik* counted on a level of 80 per cent support from the indigenous population (Van Cott, 2005: 54).

c) Crises

After (the extremely unpopular) President Abdalá Bucaram was evicted from power in 1997³⁵ facing a severe crisis of legitimacy and social unrest, the government called for a Constituent Assembly. In May 1998, a new national Constitution was passed. By this time it was clear that the indigenous movement in Ecuador ‘view[ed] political institutions and procedures as sites of their political action’ (Andolina, 2003: 723). Social movements interpreted this moment as a popular revolution and drafted (via multiple local assemblies throughout Ecuador) what was called the ‘People’s Mandate’. The mandate was mainly based on CONAIE’s plurinational project. Conversely, centre and right-wing political parties interpreted the call for a constituent assembly as the call for reform and drafted what was called the ‘Congressional Resolution’. The former put forward a radical anti-neoliberal agenda; the latter a pro-neoliberal one. Alliances between traditional political parties to secure seats on the assembly and to vote for particular reforms proved that the participation of civil organisations would be constrained by elite alliances.

The last coup of the 20th century in Ecuador was against President Jamil Mahuad ³⁶ (1998-2000) in the early days of 2000, in a period of intense crisis:

...GNP shrank 7.3 percent, foreign investment fell by 34.7 percent, imports declined by 38.4 percent, and the value of the dollar against the sucre [national currency until 2000] rose by 362 percent...almost 10 percent of the country’s 12 million inhabitants emigrated...In 1998 there were 42 banks in Ecuador; by 2000 there were only 26 (Lucero, 2001: 60).

³⁵ In the same year a 10-year project financed by the World Bank, IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) and the Ecuadorian government was implemented. The name of the project was PRODEPINE (*Proyecto de Desarrollo para los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros* – Development Project for Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples). The project was worth USD 50 million (http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/public_html/eksyst/doc/prj/region/pl/ecuador/ec_PRODEPINE.htm) [Accessed June 2012].

³⁶ Under Mahuad’s presidency the *Consejo para el Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador* –CODENPE (Council for the Development of Ecuadorian Nationalities and Peoples) was created by decree, and CONAIE was given a central role in its structure and administration.

Mahuad dollarized the economy in order to halt the dramatic rise of inflation, and attract foreign investment (Walsh, 2001). This was interpreted as a loss of national sovereignty, which consequently triggered social protests and finally, Mahuad's ousting. The coup was characterised by an unusual alliance between lower-ranked military officials and CONAIE leaders (Becker, 2008). Together, they formed the government of National Salvation which lasted only one day. Under international pressure, power was handed to vice-president Gustavo Noboa (2000-2003). Lucero (2001) explains that 'what [was] striking about the events of January 2000 [was] the shift from CONAIE's usual strategy of broad-based organizing, protest, and negotiation to one of palace revolutions and elite pacts' (Lucero, 2001: 67).

During Noboa's presidency, unpopular measures (rises in gas and transport prices, privatization and land concessions to private companies that deepened the extraction of natural resources) led to violent public demonstrations. As in the past, conflicts were solved by agreements signed between the national government and representatives of indigenous movements. With President Lucio Gutierrez (2003-2005) in power, CONAIE's leaders (Luis Macas and Nina Pacari) were assigned posts in the ministries of agriculture and foreign affairs (Becker, 2008). In 2005, Ecuador started negotiations with the USA to sign a Free Trade Agreement. This triggered popular uprisings across the country. Due to the support it offered to Gutierrez and its participation in socially discredited State institutions, CONAIE faced widespread social discredit and internal fragmentation. For the first time, the indigenous movement was unable to articulate and represent popular demands (Walsh, 2001).

In 2005, a third coup in ten years overthrew President Gutierrez. While CONAIE was involved in the mobilizations against the President, this time the main protagonist was not the indigenous movement, but middle class urban citizens (self-identified as the *forajidos* – i.e., the outlaws) who did not ally themselves with any organisational or political structure (Acosta, 2005; Philip and Panizza, 2011). As in Argentina in 2001, the people's motto was *Que se vayan todos!* - all of them out! (Ramirez Gallegos, 2010). By this time, an unknown politician, Rafael Correa, was gaining popularity by representing popular unrest against traditional political parties.

1.3 Political Leadership and the Return of the State: Rafael Correa, *Revolución Ciudadana* and *Buen Vivir* - a Post-neoliberal era?

In 2007 Correa was elected president of Ecuador. Throughout Latin America in the new millennium widespread disillusionment with the perceived failings of neoliberal policies to solve issues of poverty and inequality (and in some cases economic instability) contributed to political changes. A new generation of centre-left leaders (such as Chavez, Morales and Correa) won power by suggesting the possibility of a new dynamic in the region (Arditi, 2008; Luna and Filgueira, 2009; Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012). They put forward a provocative anti-neoliberal discourse: *Socialismo del Siglo 21* (21st Century Socialism). Coined by the German Marxist scholar Dietrich, 21st Century Socialism aims to go beyond the limitations and mistakes of both neoliberalism and the Soviet model or 20th Century Socialism (Kennemore and Weeks, 2011). While neither rejecting capitalism nor promoting a collectivist system, its goal is the re-foundation of the State as a central institution responsible for the regulation of the economy and distribution of resources in a democratic and egalitarian way (Harnecker, 2010; Pomar, 2010). In addition, new schemes of regional integration were formed: ALBA, MERCOSUR, UNASUR³⁷ (Gardini, 2010). The new leaders led unprecedented transformations: nationalization of natural resources – in the case of Ecuador the nationalisation of Petroecuador – redistribution of wealth and land, and the rewriting of national constitutions in their respective countries. Nevertheless, increasing socio-political conflicts have raised doubts about the viability and future of such transformations. In this respect, Kennemore and Weeks (2011: 267) argue that

...a volatile economic climate, poorly implemented reforms, increased opposition, and low political tolerance all indicate limitations to the viability of twenty-first-century socialism as a post-neoliberal development model.

In Ecuador, the rise of Rafael Correa and new social forces seeking to reorganise the political arena accompanied an apparent decline in the fortunes of the indigenous movement. Some scholars argue that this decline was due to the lack of representativeness of indigenous discourse in a new political and social situation (Becker, 2008; Simbaña, 2009; Ospina Peralta, 2009). CONAIE's political and organisational fragmentation and its increasingly narrow focus on ethnic issues, plus the low electoral

³⁷ ALBA: Alternativa Bolivariana para las Americas (2004). MERCOSUR: Mercado Común del Sur (1991). UNASUR: Union de Naciones Suramericanas (2008).

performance of *Pachakutik* led to public discredit and loss of leadership in the public arena. Conversely, Correa and *Alianza Pais* put forward the idea of a *Revolución Ciudadana* (citizen's revolution), placing emphasis on individual and universal rights. The idea of the government was that the so called revolution would be carried out by general citizens, that is, with no political affiliation to traditional institutions such as political parties or corporatist organisations (unions and social movement organisations). Ospina Peralta (2009) explains that Correa's strategy here was to draw on a discourse that represents universalism instead of corporatism. Conversely, indigenous organisations demonstrated their opposition to an idea which has a homogenizing and universalizing effect. Their main argument against the idea of a *Revolución Ciudadana* was that it can end up erasing political conquests that organised sectors have achieved after decades of struggle (Becker, 2010). That is, they can end up losing the places they conquered in the State. This is going to be analysed in depth in Chapter 6.

Davidov (2012) argues that Correa's strategy to differentiate his government from previous neoliberal ones is based on the articulation of the idea of a 'new moral economy', an economy which contrasts with the predominant market logic. This new moral economy praises the environment, collective action and intergenerational cooperation (Davidov, 2012: 13). Natural resources are not regarded as commodities but as a source of value (Rival, 2010). Based on indigenous ancestral knowledge, the idea of *Sumak Kawsay* (*Buen Vivir*) fits well with Correa's intention. It has been raised by Correa's government as an anti-neoliberal discourse, the alternative to previous economic and development models. In a speech at the UN Assembly, Correa argued:

Market prices are linked to the production of commodities. The market economy compensates for commodities. There are things which have a high value, but no price. Some things have very little value, yet fetch high prices; and things with great value may be priceless. Like friendship, happiness and security, the environment is priceless. In our wellbeing approach to the economy, an economy geared to generate wellbeing for all, we seek to generate value, to preserve value, and to compensate for the generation of value. This means changing the market logic through collective action and seeking other logics beyond the profit logic through agreement, justice and responsibility. This means not relying exclusively on a monetary scale of values. Things that do not have a price can be assessed in value terms. Biodiversity has multiple values. The environment is not just natural resources, it's not just another factor of production along labour and capital. To conserve nature for future generations can be an end in itself. We need nature to live (Rafael Correa, Speech at a High Level Meeting on Climate Change at the UN Assembly in New York, 2007; quoted in Rival, 2010: 358).

1.4 *Buen Vivir* regime³⁸: the Constituent Assembly and Ecuador's national Constitution

In 2007, a national referendum (approved by 80 per cent of Ecuadorian voters) finally led to the organisation of the Constituent Assembly. The writing of a new constitution was seen both by Correa's government and civil society actors as a historic moment marking the possibility of re-founding the State (Acosta, 2008; Gudynas, 2009). The Constituent Assembly was established in the city of Montecristi (Manabí province). A plurality of socially and politically organised agents participated in the debate, indigenous and Afro-American organisations, leftist political parties, environmental and feminist organisations were among the most notorious (Cortez, 2010). Each of these agents presented documents that directly or indirectly alluded to *Buen Vivir* or *Sumak Kawsay* (Kichwa). Previous to the Constituent Assembly there were a small number of publications presenting the idea of *Buen Vivir*³⁹ (GTZ, 2002; Viteri, 2002; Acosta, 2002; Sarayaku, 2003), which served as inspiration for the documents presented at the Assembly. They all converged in their critique of the dominant model of development.

The Constituent Assembly comprises ten spaces of discussion: 1) fundamental rights and constitutional guarantees; 2) organisation, social and civic participation; 3) State structure and institutions; 4) territorial organisation and allocation of competences; 5) natural resources and biodiversity; 6) labour, production, and social inclusion; 7) model of development; 8) justice and the fight against corruption; 9) sovereignty, international and regional relations; and 10) legislation and audit (Cartuche Vacacela, 2015). The participation of different collectives that brought their own proposals to be discussed in the ten spaces of deliberation opened up during the Assembly implied the mobilisation of people and resources, the negotiation of proposals and the establishment of alliances. For social movements, the mobilisation of proposals implied the establishment of a link between the proposals worked out at the community level and the dynamic of the Assembly.

³⁸ The Constitution of Montecristi introduces the *Buen Vivir* regime (2008: 199) as '...the articulated and coordinated set of systems, institutions, policies, norms, programs and services ensuring the exercise, guarantee and enforceability of the rights recognized in the constitution' (Spanish in the original. Author's translation).

³⁹ These publications referred to *Buen Vivir*, *Sumak Kawsay* (Kichwa) and *Suma Qamaña* (Aymara).

The Constituent Assembly represents a space of deliberation with the participation of a heterogeneous group of agents seeking to integrate their demands in the constitution. In doing so, they defined their visions on the State and society. This process of articulation between different sectors forced them to negotiate in order to reach to a common definition of State institutions, decentralisation, environmental issues, popular participation, rights, and so on. It was in the Constituent Assembly where the consolidation of *Buen Vivir* as the proxy upon which different socio-political agents defined their position within the post-neoliberal turn dominating the country and the region took place.

It can be defined as the most important political opportunity of the period studied here (from the beginning of the 2000s to the present). The Constituent Assembly appears to be the greatest possibility provided by an unprecedented dynamic between institutionalised politics and social movements. The call for the openness of this space of deliberation was the result of first, the confluence of historic demands mobilised mainly by the indigenous movement; and second, the emergence of a leftist movement with political will and power to call for the closure of the parliament and the openness of this new space of deliberation to write the new Constitution. Therefore, this political opportunity was actively made by both sectors. Both social movements and the government of Rafael Correa had the power to change and shape their political context.

In this process, the definitions of relevant matters to be included in the final document (rights of nature, the declaration of the country as plurinational, the rights of *Buen Vivir*) needed of the consensus and approval of those participating. This means that in the case of the Constituent Assembly the struggle over meaning and the imposition of a dominant interpretation took place during the deliberation process. This implied conflict between competing forces that framed matters in different ways according to their own visions, objectives and interests. The result, however, was the consensual definition of the articles included in the Constitution. As will be explained in Chapter 4, the tensions of this deliberative process increased after the Constituent Assembly, shaping competing visions of *Buen Vivir* and its implementation.

Finally, in 2008 Ecuador's national Constitution was approved. It presented *Buen Vivir* as the guiding principal and the main goal of development. Ecuador gained regional and

international recognition for this (Escobar, 2010; Walsh, 2010; Santos, 2010). For the first time ever, nature was considered to be the subject of rights in a national constitution. And for the first time in Ecuador, a concept based on indigenous cosmology was taken as the guiding principle.

Article 275. The development structure is the organised, sustainable and dynamic group of economic, political, socio-cultural and environmental systems which underpin the achievement of *the good way of living (sumak kawsay)*...*The good way of living* shall require persons, communities, peoples and nationalities to effectively exercise their rights and fulfil their responsibilities within the framework of interculturalism, respect for their diversity, and harmonious coexistence with nature (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, Title VI, chapter I; italics in the original).

The *Buen Vivir* regime introduced by the Constitution has two main components: the first one is the *Socio-Political* (articles 340-394) related to issues of inclusion and equity. This component resonates in areas such as health, education, social security, culture, leisure, social communication, local knowledge, and human security (article 340). The second is the *Environmental* component (articles 395-415) related to biodiversity and natural resources: nature and the environment, biodiversity, natural assets and ecosystems, natural resources, soil, water, natural heritage, urban ecology, alternative energy (Cortez, 2009; Gudynas, 2011).

Article 395...The State shall guarantee a sustainable model of development, one that is environmentally balanced and respectful of cultural diversity, conserves biodiversity and the natural regeneration capacity of ecosystems, and ensures meeting the needs of present and future generations (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008, Title VII, Chapter II, Section I).

The Constitution specifies the ‘rights of the good way of living’: water and food; a healthy environment (‘Energy sovereignty shall not be achieved to the detriment of food sovereignty nor shall it affect the right to water’⁴⁰); information and communication; culture and science; education; habitat and housing; health; and labour and social security⁴¹.

In relation to the environment, the Constitution assumes a biocentric perspective: nature is thus conceived as the subject of rights. The legal recognition of *Pachamama* (mother nature) has been generally regarded as an unprecedented advance.

Article 71. Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions, and evolutionary process (...)

Article 72. Nature has the right to be restored (...)

⁴⁰ Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008, Title II, Chapter II, Article 15.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Article 73. The State shall apply preventive and restrictive measures on activities that might lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems and the permanent alteration of natural cycles (...)

Article 74. Persons, communities, peoples, and nations shall have the right to benefit from the environment and the natural wealth enabling them to enjoy *the good way of living* (...)⁴²

In relation to the acknowledgment of Ecuador as a plurinational country there were important disputes over the definition of ‘plurinational’. As explained before, the declaration of Ecuador as a plurinational State had been the primary demand of the indigenous movement (Lupien, 2011; Jameson, 2011). This demand was based on the assumption that a more inclusive political system implies the recognition of its plurinational nature. Conversely, representatives of *Alianza Pais* ‘wished to leave the term vaguely defined; essentially ensuring that it would remain on the level of rhetoric without any significant substance or concrete implications’ (Becker, 2011: 54).

In 2010 the *Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir, Construyendo un Estado Plurinacional e Intercultural 2009-2013* (National Plan for Good Living, Building a Plurinational and Intercultural State 2009-2013)⁴³ was approved (SENPLADES⁴⁴, 2010). *Buen Vivir* is represented in the National Plan as conceptual rupture; a new paradigm of development ‘post-petroleum’; a radical change; a new social contract; and as the basis of social, economic and democratic justice. *Buen Vivir* is transformed into a set of policies, e.g., ‘[t]o promote a sustainable and territorially balanced endogenous economy for Good Living to guarantee rights. This economic system must seek productive transformation, diversification and specialization, based on the promotion of diverse forms of production’ (SENPLADES, 2010: 86); and goals, e.g., ‘[t]o reduce chronic malnutrition by 45% by 2013’ (SENPLADES, 2010: 78). Radcliffe (2012) argues that with the inclusion of *Buen Vivir* as guiding principle of the national development plan the intention is to establish a welfare regime system in Ecuador.

Ecuador...historically failed to provide systematic support for poor citizens, relying instead on informal-familialist systems where low levels of social spending compounded families’ reliance on extended unpaid hours of household labour, informal sector work and international migration...Against this background of inadequate public social policies, SK [*Sumak Kawsay*]

⁴² Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008, Title I, Chapter 7.

⁴³ The second development plan Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir 2013-2017 (National Plan for Buen Vivir) will be analysed in Chapters 4 and 6.

⁴⁴ SENPLADES: *Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo* (Secretary of National Planning and Development).

implies that a distinctive welfare regime might be created, although the programmatic and institutional bases are not yet completely in place (Radcliffe, 2012: 243).

Since the creation of the Constituent Assembly and the rise of *Buen Vivir* in politics, the *Revolución Ciudadana* brought important changes: national tax collection reached its highest peak in 2011 (USD 9561 million)⁴⁵, and the renegotiation of contracts with multinational companies operating on Ecuadorian soil has boosted the State budget. There is increasing public investment in areas such as health and education. Poverty rates based on income have fallen from 71.3 per cent to 50.9 per cent in rural areas, from 49.8 per cent to 28.6 per cent at a national level, and from 38.7 per cent to 17.4 per cent in urban areas⁴⁶ (from 2003 to 2011). The effect of these socio-economic indicators is intrinsic and not external to the production of the political process of *Buen Vivir* in Ecuador.

Many contradictions and disagreements on the definition and implementation of these transformations guided by the idea of *Buen Vivir* have been made apparent. The most controversial ones are related to the extractive activities, on which the Ecuadorian economy is still heavily dependent. Critics of the economic policies of the government have labelled this as progressive neo-extractivism (Gudynas, 2010), pointing to the important reforms made in terms of the new role of the State in the economy and greater fiscal pressure on the wealthy, whilst maintaining at the same time the traditional model of development based mainly on extractive activities. The lack of diversification of the economy, the negative socio and environmental impacts of natural resource extraction, and the resultant high dependency on the global fluctuations of commodity prices are among the strongest critiques made mainly by social and environmental movements. On the other hand, the controversy over the limited popular participation in decision-making processes and the tense relationship between the government of Rafael Correa and historical actors (such as parts of the indigenous movement) has also been a source of new conflicts.

The first moment of articulation of different political forces and heterogeneous demands represented by the Constituent Assembly as well as the second moment of tensions and

⁴⁵ SENPLADES (2010).

⁴⁶ Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC).

fragmentation between these forces is reflected on the academic publications on *Buen Vivir*. I divide the publications on *Buen Vivir* in two clusters. The first cluster of publications (from 2008 to 2010 approximately) reflects the novelty and the radical otherness of this idea that draws on indigenous philosophy. They outline the proposals of change arising from *Buen Vivir* and the importance of its unprecedented inclusion in legal and policy documents. The second cluster of publications (from 2010 to the present) moves the debate on the matter to acknowledge the existence of competing understandings of *Buen Vivir*.

1.5 First and Second Cluster of Publications on *Buen Vivir*: the Decoloniality Approach

The publications on *Buen Vivir* and *Sumak Kawsay* during the 2000s are mainly focused on the meanings of *Buen Vivir* given by indigenous leaders and intellectuals, and on the ones elaborated for their inclusion in legal documents such as the national constitutions, and the first national plan of *Buen Vivir*⁴⁷. The latter reflects the contribution not only of the indigenous movement but also the heterogeneous collective of agents participating in the process opened up by the Constituent Assembly. As explained in the introduction of this chapter, these publications tend to present a homogeneous and essentialising view on the matter, with little consideration for the organisational, cultural and political history of the groups mobilising these ideas. From 2010 to the present it is possible to find academic work that acknowledges the existence of competing understandings of *Buen Vivir*, and also provides an interesting critique of its origins. This thesis builds upon this second wave of publications adding the sociological and political analysis of the actors involved.

The main focus of the first definitions published on *Buen Vivir* is placed on the meaning of the concept according to the indigenous *cosmovision* emphasising it as an alternative epistemology and ontology to the one underpinning Western civilisation. In most of these publications it is more common to find the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* (in original Kichwa language) instead of *Buen Vivir* (its Spanish translation). These analyses work on the meaning of *Sumak Kawsay* as having a strong normative component. A unified and single

⁴⁷ Acosta (2008); Medina (2008); Tortosa (2009); Fernandez (2009); Albó (2009); Hernandez (2009); Gudynas (2009); Chiroque Solano and Mutuberria Lazarini (2009); Salgado (2010); Walsh (2010).

definition tends to be presented (although it is acknowledged that the idea of the ‘good life’ can be found in different indigenous cosmologies – Guarani, Ashuar, Mapuche). *Sumak* (Kichwa) means ‘beautiful’, ‘good’, ‘tenderness’, and ‘perfect’. The meaning of ‘*Kawsay*’ is ‘to dwell’ and ‘to live with others’ (Albó, 2009, Salgado, 2010). Its antonym is *Waqcha* (Kichwa) meaning ‘orphan’ or ‘abandoned’. These terms denote a strong relational component. Analysts explain that the ‘good life’ can only be reached with others through the praxis of solidarity, reciprocity and communion. ‘Living better’ is rejected as a common goal as ‘better’ implies ‘in comparison with others’ and, most of the time, at the expense of others (Medina, 2008). *Buen Vivir* expresses a harmonious relationship between humans on the one hand, and humans and nature on the other. It forms part of a cosmology that interrelates ‘beings, knowledges, logics, and rationalities of thought, action, existence, and living’ (Walsh 2010: 18). The multiple dimensions of life cannot be conceived in any other way than intertwined; therefore, *Buen Vivir* encompasses all, without hierarchies. Salgado (2010) explains that ‘according to the Andean view of culture, the final objective of human activity is not power or money accumulation, but the nurturing of a tender, harmonious and vigorous life – a *Sumak Kawsay* – both for humanity and Mother Earth: the *Pachamama*’ (Salgado, 2010: 200-201).

The idea of the ‘good life’ can be found not only in Kichwa cosmologies. In Aymara it is referred to as *Suma Qamaña* (translated in Spanish as *vivir bien*). In Guarani the name is *Ñande Reko* (harmonious life) and encompasses ideas of the good life (*teko kavi*), the land without evil (*yvy mara’y*), and the path to the noble life (*qhapaj ñan*) (Gudynas, 2011: 442-443). In Ashuar the term is ‘*Shiir Waras*’; and in Mapuche is ‘*Kume Mongen*’. Thomson (2011) explains that while these concepts are not synonymous they share roots and meanings.

Notions such as plurality, quality of life, equilibrium and circular time, synergy with nature, communal economy, intercultural and inter-generational coexistence, local and direct democracy are the bases of *Buen Vivir*. Reaching *Buen Vivir* does not assume the existence of a previous stage of underdevelopment (Escobar 2010) as notions such as evolution, linear time, and progress do not apply in this indigenous world vision. According to the indigenous cosmology, the future is behind us, representing the unknown. What is in front of us is the past, that is to say, the lived experience that guides

new developments. At the same time, economic growth is not rejected in itself. What indigenous peoples reject is, to paraphrase Habermas (1987), the colonisation of their lifeworld (guided by a relational rationality) by the instrumental rationality of the economy at the expense of their own values.

Mainstream publications on *Buen Vivir* followed the reasoning proposed by the cluster of authors working from the so-called decoloniality approach. A group of authors including Coronil (1993), Dussel (1994), Mignolo (2000, 2003), Quijano (2000), Escobar (2007, 2010), Grosfoguel (2007), Walsh (2008), Blaser (2009), and de la Cadena (2010) have been working on the idea of *decoloniality* or *modernity / coloniality* to understand and explain changes, social and political transformations and future horizons in Latin America. The primary premise here is that coloniality and the capitalist system are constitutive elements of modernity in Latin America (Blaser, 2009). Walsh (2008) explains this in terms of a ‘coloniality matrix’ formed by four dimensions: (i) coloniality of power: race and ethnicity used as instruments for control and domination, determining in turn the construction, distribution and power hierarchy of social identities (white at the top, indigenous at the bottom); (ii) coloniality of knowledge: imposition of one sole source of knowledge (Eurocentrism) excluding alternative epistemologies (Santos, 2008); (iii) coloniality of being: discrimination, inferiorization and dehumanization of the Other considered thereafter as *salvaje* (savage), *bárbaro* (barbarian) and *primitivo* (primitive); and (iv) coloniality of nature: based on the binary division of nature-culture excluding Other forms of conceptualizing such a relationship (see Maturana and Varela, 1987; Latour, 1993; de la Cadena, 2010). The result of the application of the ‘coloniality matrix’ in Latin America provided a capitalist, Christian, colonial and modern framework of society at the expense of alternative worldviews and cultural models.

The State is conceived as the most important instrument of colonization in the region. Its formation following the European model helped the development and maintenance of internal colonialism (Bonetto, 2012). Whilst State formation engendered political independence, cultural and economic dependence from Europe remained unaffected, with the consequent cultural homogenization and exclusion of vast majority of the population (mainly indigenous, black and *mestizos*). The knowledges, languages, and worldviews of excluded groups were ignored, suppressed or subordinated. The Eurocentric construction of knowledge determined universal categories and concepts

based on normative propositions. Other knowledges became archaic, primitive and pre-modern (Lander, 2003).

Here, the focus is placed on the interaction between the local and the global (Mignolo, 2000), i.e., how local histories become privileged spaces where global designs ‘are adapted, rejected, integrated or ignored, and the confrontation of two kinds of histories occurs’ (Domingues, 2009: 117). The cluster of authors working on the concept of decoloniality, or modernity / coloniality, propose situating the analysis on the borders of modern epistemology, what Mignolo (2000, 2005) calls ‘border thinking’ as a re-articulation of the colonial difference from a position of *exteriority* and against any form of totality. The modernity / coloniality approach advocates a pluriversal epistemology of the future, locating itself ‘in the very borders of systems of thought reaching towards the possibility of non-Eurocentric modes of thinking, and counter to the great modernist narratives (Christianity, liberalism, and Marxism)’ (Escobar, 2007: 180). In this sense, it questions the social sciences, arguing for a surpassing of the humanities, which are regarded as complicit with modernity.

Congruent with the work of Fanon (1967), Wallerstein (1974), Dussel (1977) and the dependency theory, these authors interpret the transformations at stake in many Latin American countries (both at the level of the State and social movements, with new political projects such as the ones represented by *Revolución Ciudadana* and *Buen Vivir*) as presenting the possibility of breaking with the coloniality matrix, whilst putting forward alternatives to modernity and with it, alternatives to development in the region. Development is understood here as defined by Radcliffe (2015: 5): ‘[d]evelopment consists of a “will to improve”, an impulse to governmentality and pastoral interventions that seek to ameliorate the living conditions or social attributes of a population’. Traditional discourses defining it as based on economic growth, the expansion of material wealth and industrialization has been scrutinized and questioned in the last decades (Max-Neef, 1991; Escobar, 1992; Grillo and Stirrat, 1997; Chambers, 1997; Sen, 1999; Kliksberg, 2004; Nussbaum, 2011). As a consequence, alternative paradigms of development have incorporated social inclusion, cultural difference, environmental protection, gender equality, and popular participation among their main concerns (Andolina et al, 2009: 9).

Authors working within the decoloniality approach study the interrelation of knowledge coming both from the center and the periphery to expose the history of past and present domination, and to construct social, political, ethical and epistemic alternatives to the dominant capitalist and modern order (Santos, 2010). Proposed here is a deconstruction of colonized subjects and the devices of power that have determined the ways reality has been constructed.

Authors such as Albó (2009) and Galindo (2010) formulate this in terms of the constitution of ‘Indigenous Modernities’ based on ancestral knowledge, communal practices, inter-culturality and an interrelation between humans and nature. However, Escobar (2010) makes a distinction between alternative modernizations and decoloniality projects. The former is

...based on an anti-neoliberal development model, in the direction of a post-capitalist economy and an alternative form of modernity...but does not engage significantly with the...hegemony of Euro-modernity (...) The *decolonial project* is based on a different set of practices (e.g. communal, indigenous, hybrid, and above all, pluriversal and intercultural), leading to a post-liberal society... (Escobar, 2010: 11, italics in the original)

Escobar (2010) identifies the first project (alternative modernizations) as dominating at State level, and the decoloniality project as mainly mobilized by social movements. I agree with Escobar in identifying two projects operating at two different levels: the State and civil society, particularly in countries such as Ecuador and Bolivia where the *Buen Vivir* discourse is played out by different actors. I argue that these two projects are the core of the political process in Ecuador (analysed in Chapter 6). However, Escobar’s analysis of the projects point to a lack of interaction between them, which is contrary to the argument of this thesis. The analysis of key events in the political process allows me to show that there are moments of articulation and moments of differentiation between the two projects mobilised by the State and by indigenous social movements.

While I acknowledge the importance and innovation of this school of thought in understanding the current situation in Latin America, and the ‘decolonial move’ at stake in countries such as Ecuador, my point of departure is slightly different. I argue that the modernity / coloniality approach presents a number of limitations. The first is related to a certain tendency among advocates to conceptualize ‘the indigenous’ as a homogenous

unity and indigenous knowledge as preserved in a state of ‘purity’ (not contaminated by modernity). As shown in Chapter 1, behind the construction of ‘the indigenous’ in the case of Ecuador there are political parties of the left, indigenous organisations working in partnership with international NGOs, religious organisations, and peasant trade unions that feel that they do belong to the West (and modernity). The reactions to this ambivalent and contradictory position are varied (but do not exclusively imply the rejection of modernity).

Furthermore, this approach leads to an abstract construction of ‘the indigenous’ with a strong normative component, neglecting the organisational and political trajectory of these groups. The indigenous movement and its social organisations have a political and social trajectory that enables them to be considered a highly organised social (and political) movement that has participated in and shaped national development. Its political and social salience put the movement into an advantaged position in comparison with other movements. They have developed discourses, forged alliances, moved up and down scales strategically, obtained and disputed resources, and occupied places in State institutions.

According to the decoloniality approach, in order to be valid, the decolonial stance has to be not only peripheral but also ethnically based (Mignolo, 2000: 103). In addition, this approach works with a dichotomous thinking (good / bad, liberation / domination; modernity = bad + domination), which treats the complexity at stake in a reductive manner. Following this logic, if projects of change do not represent an epistemic break with modernity then they are, at least, deemed complicit in coloniality. I consider that placing indigenous social movements outside modernity is misguided, as their struggles are formed from a plurality and mixture of positionalities that bring them both closer to and away from modernity (Cheah, 2006; Domingues, 2009). This tension has to be acknowledged but not reduced.

In later years, analysts have acknowledged the existence of multiple and contested understandings of *Buen Vivir* that points to the lack of consensus about the meaning of this idea (Cortez, 2011; Stefanoni, 2011; Radcliffe, 2012; Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara, 2014; Hidalgo-Capitán *et al*, 2014; Gudynas, 2014; Breton *et al*, 2014; Oviedo Freire, 2013, 2014; Viola Recasens, 2014). These analyses mainly refer to the intellectual

traditions behind each definition. In that way, these publications distinguish between (i) an *indigenista*⁴⁸ definition of *Buen Vivir*; (ii) a neo-Marxist definition of *Buen Vivir* mainly blended with contributions such as 21st Century Socialism; and (iii) a post-development definition of *Buen Vivir*. This thesis builds upon these studies adding the sociological and political analysis. These competing definitions will be analysed in depth in Chapter 4 in order to show how they are used to trace boundaries (us and them) between political forces.

In addition, some of the publications of this second cluster argue against understandings of *Buen Vivir* that defines it as essentially indigenous. The work of Breton, Cortez and Garcia (2014) and Viola Recasens (2014), for instance, consider that *Buen Vivir* has been treated as forming part of an idealized indigenous philosophy able to remain out of the influence of Western culture, which in turn has helped to construct an archetypical, decontextualised and mythical image of “the Andean civilisation” (Breton et al, 2014: 12. Spanish in the original. Author’s translation). Viola Recasens (2014) is radical in his critique. The author argues that *Buen Vivir*’s idealisation actually refers to, using the term coined by Hobsbawm (1983), an ‘invented tradition’. An invented tradition refers to symbolic practices that force their connection with the past in order to inculcate norms and values in the present. In the case of invented traditions, the continuity with the past is fictitious. They are actually new responses to new situations that adopt the form of past traditions.

The analysis of Viola Recasens (2014) is provocative. I would add that, invented or not, the consequences of an idealisation of *Buen Vivir* are that little attention is paid to the current living conditions of indigenous and peasants communities, the omission of the indigenous presence in the cities, the homogenisation of indigenous peoples, and the neglecting of their political interests. Furthermore, such idealisation assumes the intrinsic ownership of *Buen Vivir* by indigenous peoples and therefore, their ‘natural’ leadership over a process of transformation guided by this idea. In Chapter 4 I show that competing definitions of *Buen Vivir* should be conceived as strategically constructed and

⁴⁸ *Indigenista* is historically defined as a political ideology that recognises the specificity of the Indigenous Question and the right of indigenous peoples to receive special and favourable treatment in compensation of their long-standing discrimination and marginalisation (Lucero, 2008; Luis Hidalgo-Capitan *et al.*, 2014).

reconstructed through power struggles between different forces. In Chapter 5 and 6 I show how the indigenous movement is disputing (and losing) the leadership of a process that is currently in the hands of the government of Rafael Correa.

1.6 Towards the interrogation of *Buen Vivir* as contentious politics

In this chapter, the main organisational, political and cultural features of two agents, the indigenous movement and the government of Rafael Correa, were outlined in order to show the importance of linking discourses with the practices, agency and materialities of those who mobilise them.

In the case of the indigenous movement, this chapter traced how the indigenous discourse developed from (i) material demands related to land, to (ii) ethnic-based claims linked to territory, to (iii) the development of the idea of nationalities which enabled their unification in one sole movement, to finally, (iv) the configuration of the idea of plurinationality. *Land, territory, nationality, plurinationality* and *Buen Vivir* have acted as discursive vehicles for the indigenous political project. The evolution of these demands from materiality to the claim for a pluralist system has been facilitated by the articulation of alliances, different political openings to collective action, specific national, regional and international contexts, and organisational forms. The final configuration of the indigenous movement's political project based on the construction of Ecuador as plurinational is directly linked to their idea of *Buen Vivir*. As will be analysed in depth in Chapter 4, the construction of a Plurinational State is conceived by the indigenous movement as the main mechanism to achieve *Buen Vivir*.

In the case of the rise of Rafael Correa to power and the emergence of *Alianza Pais* as a political movement, their ability to bring together historical popular demands and frame them as *Revolución Ciudadana* is going to be analysed in Chapter 4. This process of articulating a plurality of demands and including them in institutional politics opens a new dynamic. In doing so, the government installed the idea of universality vs. corporatism (targeting historic agents such as the indigenous movement). The idea of a *Revolución Ciudadana* has been blended with the 21st Century Socialism and the idea of *Buen Vivir*. This strategy has enabled Correa's government to establish itself in an anti-neoliberal position differentiated from previous Ecuadorian governments. As will be

shown in Chapter 4, these are all bold ideas with ambiguous meanings that have triggered positive and negative reactions among both the population and commentators on the country's development. The apparent contradictions between a robust rhetoric and the actual implementation of policies, presenting (so far) mixed results and contrary to the principles of *Buen Vivir* as laid out in official policies have triggered increasing unrest among particular sectors of the population. Correa's statement naming protesters as terrorists, qualifying environmentalists as romantic and leftists as infantile has become representative of his style of confronting those who oppose or express dissent with the government's decisions (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011). Among these sectors, one culprit is the indigenous movement, mainly represented by CONAIE.

The rise of *Buen Vivir* in politics and the process of reconfiguring the political settlement have triggered the challenge of existing understandings of the relationship between social movements vis-à-vis the State. In the following chapter, the main theoretical debates on this relationship are discussed in order to delineate the principal conceptual lines underpinning the rationale of this research.

2

Interrogating Contentious Politics in Latin America: the interaction between social movements and the State

Social movements are inevitably political,
and must develop a political project if they are to prosper.
Foweraker, 1995: 62

Introduction

The situation in contemporary Ecuador since the rise of *Buen Vivir* provides a fascinating case to explore the dynamics of the tension between the State and social movements as both have been fundamental in the rise of *Buen Vivir* in politics. Both have also entered a new phase of the political process marked by a central role of the State in planning and controlling the economy, which has led to a more control and regulation of market forces whilst at the same time increasing the State's decision-making power over public policy, the fall of traditional political parties, the rise of popular political leaders and the articulation of an anti-neoliberal political project represented by *Buen Vivir*.

The overall argument of this thesis is that the political process in contemporary Ecuador encompasses two moments. The first moment is marked by the articulation between the indigenous movement and the government of Rafael Correa. This articulation enables the rise of *Buen Vivir* as a political project and its inclusion in institutional politics. The second moment reflects the differentiation and fragmentation between these two sectors. In both moments, the agents involved strategically define the meaning of *Buen Vivir* according to their own political interests (Research Question 1), deploy strategies, dispute resources and the leadership of the political process (Research Question 2). The main goal is to legitimise their own understanding of *Buen Vivir* and impose it for its implementation through State policies (Research Question 3).

This new situation enables the re-examination of what has been written on the relationship between political structure (State) and insubordination (social movements). The key idea

binding the thesis together is the construction of strategic positioning in the light of the rise of *Buen Vivir* in institutional politics, and its effects on the relationship between the indigenous movement and the State in Ecuador. Therefore, the principal conceptual lines underpinning the research point to the relationship between social movements and the State, between collective organised action and political structure. Within the New Social Movements Theory, the political process approach (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007) provides a pertinent analytical framework to grasp the complexities of this relationship in the Ecuadorian context because it brings together contention, collective action and politics connecting micro and macro processes and the institutionalised contexts of mobilisation (Diani and McAdam, 2003). This theoretical approach pays attention to the relationship between agency and structure focusing in the relationship of three categories that refers to the construction of meaning (framing processes), organisational forms (mobilising structures) and political structures (political opportunities structure). They are an initial framework for the analysis of contentious politics in contemporary Ecuador that helps me to explore how collective action affects the political structure and vice versa in a particular moment of the history of Ecuador when the agents studied in this thesis aim at the construction of a postneoliberal turn in the country.

The indigenous movement and its social organisations have a political and social trajectory that enables them to be considered a highly organised social (and political) movement that has participated in and shaped national development. This is why the indigenous movement in Ecuador is considered here a rational actor (goal-oriented). Its political and social salience put the movement into an advantaged position in comparison with other movements. It have developed discourses, forged alliances, moved up and down scales strategically, obtained and disputed resources, and occupied places in State institutions. For this reason, I consider that New Social Movements theory is a good framework for the study of the indigenous movement *vis-à-vis* the State. As mentioned before, within New Social Movements theory, the political process approach is particularly relevant as it provides useful analytical tools. The articulation of three distinctive but interconnected categories is used in this thesis as main analytical framework: (a) framing processes ; (b) mobilizing structures, and (c) political opportunities (McAdam *et al*, 1996; Diani and McAdam, 2003; Tilly and Tarrow, 2007).

However, I consider that the political process approach provides a limited understanding of the nature of the State in the Latin American context. New Social Movement theory, and particularly the political process approach used in this thesis, helps me to understand the dynamics and interactions between the State and social movements but less so to assess the changing nature of the State as a result of it. This last aspect is key because part of the argument of this thesis is that the political process of *Buen Vivir* has produced a renewal of political settlements that is expressed in a new role of the State in the political and economic realm. Therefore, in this chapter I work with the definition of the State given by Latin American Marxist authors Lechner (1980), Aricó (1981), Zavaleta (1990) and Thwaites Rey (2012, 2010). These authors develop a definition of the State as having a contradictory and relational nature, considering the State a platform for the inscription of social conflicts. In this way, the State is defined as a place where social and political struggles materialize. This understanding of the State allows me to discuss the relationship between social movements and the State, focusing on the main dilemmas of this, I argue, necessary relationship.

This chapter is structured in two parts. The first one is dedicated to a discussion of the main approaches to social organisation. In the first section I review three approaches within the New Social Movements theory, that is: identity-based, resource-mobilisation and the one used in this thesis, the political process approach. Their principal features and limitations are highlighted, as well as their application in the Latin American context. I finally, develop my interpretation of these approaches and the pertinence of the political process approach to analyse the relationship between indigenous movement and the State in the context of rise to *Buen Vivir* to institutional politics. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to define the State and specifically to the discussion of the definition given by Lechner (1980), Aricó (1981), Zavaleta (1990) and Thwaites Rey (2012, 2010).

2.1 Social Movements in Latin America

Forty years after the emergence of the ‘new’ social movements in Latin America, many of them have consolidated their positions, not only within civil society but also in the political arena. In the case of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, its agenda today forms part of the national government’s agenda, in turn opening up new conflicts and struggles for this movement. In this context, a critical revision of the literature on social

movements, as well as a redefinition of the most appropriate criteria for their analysis, is needed.

There is no general agreement on how to define social movements. Authors such as Jelin (1986), Cardoso (1987) and Touraine (1988) argue that social movements are ultimately the construction of the researcher who conceives them as a collective of action: 'movements form a unity only when we look at them from the outside looking for similarities... if we prioritize their differences they cease to form a uniform object' (Cardoso, 1987: 32). Theoretical divisions between 'old' and 'new' movements, as well as between 'identity-based' and 'resource-mobilization' approaches, represent attempts to set the boundaries of such categories. In any case, there is general agreement that social movements are a dynamic component of civil society (Cohen and Arato, 1997; Pearce, 2010), challenging the boundaries of what has been traditionally perceived as 'politics', as well as the actors associated with it.

Two of the most important approaches to social movements, namely identity-based (commonly identified as new social movements theory) and resource-mobilisation theories have emerged in Europe (the former) and in the US (the latter). Their distinct theoretical approaches to collective action have been determined for the most part by the different processes of transformation in these two geopolitical contexts after the 1960s (Cohen, 1985). Theoretically, the European approach emerged in reaction to the structural analysis offered by Marxism. Resource mobilisation theory represented a response to the psychological analysis of collective action predominating in the US. A third approach to social movements, the political process approach, also developed in the US, attempted to synthesize the identity-based and resource-mobilisation approaches. This is the approach adopted in this thesis to analyse the political process of *Buen Vivir* in contemporary Ecuador.

New social movements theory, particularly the identity-based approach, was initially well-received by scholars studying contentious action in Latin America (Jelin, 1985; Slater, 1985). The emergence of new social phenomena challenging classic interpretations of social conflict as class contradiction led to initial enthusiasm for the new theory. Some scholars (Foweraker, 1995; Reiter, 2011) have warned about the implications of uncritically applying these approaches to the Latin American context.

Foweraker (1995) argues that they might best be applied in a 'selective and pragmatic fashion' (1995: 7). However, the identity-based perspective has been largely (and most of the time uncritically) applied to analyse collective action in Latin America, whereas resource-mobilisation and political process theories have been partly neglected.⁴⁹ The result has been the proliferation of disparate associations labelled as 'new social movements', making it a catch-all category. Differences between the Latin American and European context, however, show that even though the core points of these theories are relevant in the analysis of contentious action in Latin America, a critical revision that acknowledges political, cultural and economic differences, as well as the geopolitical dynamic of knowledge, is needed for a more accurate interpretation (Reiter, 2011).

The first difference is related to the class composition of new social movements. European new social movements are principally composed of the educated middle-class, which in turn is mainly employed in service occupations (Offe, 1985). This explains in part the fact that their actions are not principally driven by economic demands. The assumption here is that activists have already achieved (more than) basic conditions of living. Conversely, new social movements in Latin America have mostly emerged from the margins and in contexts of material deprivation. Their social bases are still struggling to survive, popular classes are their main components, and material demands are still of paramount importance (Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Foweraker, 1995; Stahler-Sholk *et al.*, 2007). In this context, members of social movements are mainly peasants, workers, indigenous peoples, the landless, students and the unemployed (Biekart, 2005). In this sense, it can be argued that the composition of Latin American social movements partly questions the 'newness' of the identities supposedly expressed by new social movements. Zamosc (2007: 28) argues that "indigenous struggles in Latin America falsify the basic tenets of the new social movements".

The relation between movements and the State in Latin America constitutes another important difference. The novelty of European social movements is partly explained by the fact that they neither target the State nor aim to take political power. Instead, it is democratization and the expansion of civil society that normally constitute their main

⁴⁹ Yashar (2005, 2007) and Van Cott (2005) are exceptions as both authors analyse social movements in Latin America from a resource-mobilization perspective.

objective. By making this distinction in relation to old movements' aims, new social movement theory presupposed an already consolidated, modern and unrestricted civil society framed by a liberal democratic regime (Foweraker, 1995; Cohen and Arato, 1997). On the contrary, Latin American new social movements emerged in a context of repression and authoritarian rule. In this context, Reiter (2011) explains that

[a] U.S. focus on combating the spread of communism in Latin America provided opportunities for some local civic organisations while severely restricting the chances for institutional survival of others... what emerged in these years [1980s] was not "new" but a response to new political opportunities and a new environment... (2011: 162).

Under an authoritarian regime, Latin American traditional political actors and organisations, such as trade unions and (mainly leftist) political parties, to a great extent lost their capacity to mediate and influence in the political arena. During the 1970s and especially the 1980s, the emergence of human rights movements (such as the Mothers of the Disappeared in Argentina), ecological movements (such as those in Brazil against the destruction of the Amazonian rain forest), women's movements (such as women organizing themselves in Chile to demand political participation) and indigenous movements (such as can be found in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia) were quickly labeled as new social movements (Calderon *et al.*, 1992). Strategies were different (they did not target the State), and their demands were shaped in a different way. As such, it was thought that they easily fitted the new category of 'new social movements'. However, it can be argued that if these movements did not initially direct their demands towards the State it was to a great extent because in this context there was no (or little) possibility to do so. In an authoritarian and repressive context, actors found alternative ways of coming together for collective action. As the social and political trajectory of the indigenous movement during the 1990s show, the State is considered an important interlocutor for social movements. This is in line with Tilly and Tarrow's (2007) analysis, which argues that the repertoire and performance of contentious action is highly influenced by the political regimes under which they operate; that is to say, the broader structural context. In this respect, Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna (1992) state that

When society is suffocated by the state, it seeks a mechanism of defense and different ways of coming together; in the process, it makes actors of those who try to affirm themselves, to define their identities apart from and in spite of the state (Calderon *et al.*, 1992: 24).

In turn, the mid-1980s witnessed a return to democracy in most Latin American countries, as well as the development of the neoliberal model of governance (with the concomitant aggravation of the economic crisis). In this context, what constituted a

novelty for social movements was the proliferation of local, national and international (mainly Northern) non-governmental and development organizations throughout the region (Bebbington, 1997; Pearce, 1997; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Reiter, 2011). Debates on the complexities of NGO-social movement relationships in Latin America abound, pointing to both the benefits as well as the constraints (Petras, 1997; Hulme and Edwards, 1997; Pearce, 2000). Despite this, it can be argued that the relationships established between these types of organisations have helped social movements to open up new opportunities, secure new resources, and – in the case of indigenous movements – place ‘identity’ at the core of their struggle.

Having considered these important differences between social movements in the Latin American and European context, in what follows I briefly review each approach within the new social movement theory highlighting the main reasons to choose the one developed by Tilly and Tarrow, which is called the political process approach.

2.2 Identity-based approach

Briefly, the identity-based approach explains the emergence of new social movements as the result of the reaction to a deep societal transformation. Touraine (1988) explains this structural transformation as the transition from industrial to post-industrial society. Castell (1983) describes the transformation as one from production to reproduction, while Habermas (1973) describes it as one from liberal to late capitalism. In addition, Touraine (1988) and Melucci (1980) explain this shift by referring to citizens’ capacity for ‘reflexivity’. It is this capacity that puts ‘identity’ at the core of ‘new’ movements. The construction and mobilization of a common identity provides meaning that reinforces solidarity between a movement’s participants. However, it is not only a question of the expression of an identity and a set of values, but about their politicization. In this respect, Cohen (1985) states

...the salient feature of the NSMs [new social movements] is not that they engage in expressive action or assert their identities but that they involve actors who have become *aware* of their capacity to create identities and of power relations involved in their social construction...Contemporary collective actors see, in other words, that the creation of identity involves social contestation around the reinterpretation of norms, the creation of new meanings, and a challenge to the social construction of the very boundaries between public, private, and political domains of action (Cohen, 1985: 694).

Habermas (1973, 1987), a key author within the new social movement theory, conceptualises society as formed both by the interrelation of lifeworld and system. The

emergence of social movements is characterised by him as a reaction against the colonization of their lifeworld by the system. Lifeworld is understood as a socially and culturally transmitted background of knowledge that reflects and determines people's interpretation of the world; an interconnection of meanings that enable, on the one hand, the formation of bonds of solidarity, and on the other, the establishment of a social order aimed at the reproduction of the same lifeworld. People's lifeworlds are moved by a relational rationality. The system, in turn, is represented, according to Habermas, by State and economic institutions, (bureaucracy and market forces). These institutions, however, follow an instrumental rationality. Habermas further argues that in current capitalist societies, the system has gained autonomy from areas of everyday life, resulting first in the uncoupling of system from lifeworld and second, in the penetration of instrumental rationality into the latter. This is what Habermas calls the 'colonization of the lifeworld'. As stated earlier, social mobilization emerges as a defence against such colonization (Blaug, 1997; Edwards, 2008). Movements are located by Habermas within the socio-cultural sphere.

According to Offe (1985), these new social movements become *political* when they claim that their "*means* of action can be recognised as legitimate *and* the *ends* of that action can become binding for the wider community" (1985: 826). Hence, movements go from social to political when their values, practices and world visions are legitimately mobilised⁵⁰ in order to challenge hegemonic norms. Their actions are principally driven by cultural, symbolic and strongly normative oriented demands (Snow *et al.*, 1986) which are in turn non-negotiable (Scott, 1990).

Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) conception of social movements points to the discursive construction of identity mobilised by new actors. According to the authors, identity is not fixed but formed by the intersection of different subject positions brought by the plurality of actors forming the (always open) unity of the social movement. They argue that identity is ultimately constructed in the process of mobilization. Identity is therefore constitutive of and resulting from political struggle, which traces the boundaries delimiting the movement. These boundaries determine an 'us' and 'them' with a consequent inclusion / exclusion dynamic.

⁵⁰ Examples of illegitimate forms of mobilisation are terrorist acts and private crimes (Offe, 1985).

The identity-based approach is mainly centred on *why* social movements emerge; the processes by which people construct and mobilise their identity for collective action (Dalton *et al.*, 1990). This approach stresses that it is the mobilisation of identity which constitutes the novelty of new social movements.

...autonomous, voluntary, and indigenous associations within civil society using and expanding public discourse and public spaces for discourse are the *differentia specifica* of contemporary social movements (Cohen and Arato, 1997: 507).

This approach emerges as an attempt to explain the effects of societal transformation at stake in Europe since the 1970s, and the diversity of demands triggered by these changes that could no longer be explained by classic Marxist theory; that is to say, in class terms. However, one of the main critiques directed at this approach is precisely related to this structural view (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). By explaining the formation of movements as a reaction to structural societal changes and emphasising informality, spontaneity, and non-negotiability of their demands, the approach not only narrows analysis to the movements' initial phase of emergence but also confuses this initial stage with the movement as a whole (Scott, 1990). Once social movements have already been formed and gained position as political actors within civil and political society (as is the case of indigenous movements in Latin America), the adoption of strategies to achieve goals makes movements face organisational challenges which could bring them closer to 'conventional political forms' (Scott, 1990; Mueller, 1992). Furthermore, when this happens, part of their demands in effect become negotiable.

Were goals to remain non-negotiable movements, we would be left with little more than the hope for a cultural revolution in values. To build non-negotiability and indifference towards the state into the definition of new social movements is to define them as exclusively cultural movements (Scott, 1990: 154).

It can be argued that the identity-based theory lacks the analytical tools to understand movements' organisational challenges and the strategic alliances they establish with other actors (e.g. NGOs, political parties). I consider that this flaw of the identity-based approach makes it not suitable for the analysis of the political process of *Buen Vivir* as organisational factors are important to understand the contentious interaction with the State. In analysing the struggle of contemporary indigenous movements in cases such as Ecuador, where they are already consolidated and recognised as political actors, the focus must be placed on the organizational challenges they face. Finally, critics of this approach also point to the lack of analysis of the political conditions in which social movements

emerge (hindering or facilitating movement formation). These points are precisely the main focus of analysis of the resource-mobilisation paradigm.

2.3 Resource-mobilisation approach

The resource-mobilisation approach aims to explain, first, *how* actors become involved in collective action, and second, how they coordinate efforts into a common and sustained action (Tarrow, 1994: 9). This theory emerged in the 1970s mainly as a response to the limitations presented by the then dominant psychological explanation of collective action (collective-behaviour paradigm). According to the latter (Kornhauser, 1959; Smelser, 1962), the discontent and frustration (interpreted as psychological reactions), triggered by the breakdown of social control organisations and economic crisis, act as a powerful catalyst for non-institutional collective action. The crowd, which for this paradigm forms the basis of any social movement, is conceived as irrational, unorganised and anomic, emerging via mechanisms of contagion and diffusion.

Conversely, resource-mobilization theory (Olson, 1965; Costain, 1992) emphasises organisation, resources⁵¹, opportunities, strategies and the participation of rational actors as key factors in social mobilization. By doing so, the paradigm has developed a robust empirical-analytical framework. The formation of a movement is based on the assumption of conflicting relationships between groups with different interests (power relations). What accounts for their formation is the availability of resources and political opportunities. Movements are therefore conceived of as goal-oriented, and the State is normally seen as their main target. Actors follow a utilitarian (cost-benefit) logic for participating in collective action.

The main criticisms of this approach focus precisely on the instrumental and individualistic understanding of action, which to a great extent underestimates cultural and historical factors. For the resource-mobilisation approach, the construction and mobilization of new identities, meanings and values are assumed as obvious parts of the process (preconditions) and are therefore not worth analysis. On the contrary, Melucci (1988) argues that actors' capacity to evaluate opportunities and establish strategies is

⁵¹ Relevant resources for social mobilization include energy, ideas, practices, and material objects (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007: 206).

highly dependent on the construction of their identity as a collective, which in turn is influenced by contextual factors. Furthermore, the resource-mobilization approach develops a static understanding of social movements' strategies and interests without giving consideration to how these strategies might change in the process of mobilization. In relation to this point, the resource-mobilization approach places a strong emphasis on leadership as responsible for developing strategies, whereas membership is mainly seen as mere resource for implementation (Hannigan, 1985). As it will be explained in following sections, leadership is a key aspect in this thesis but is conceived in a relational way. These are important points that the resource-mobilisation approach does not deal with appropriately. The following approach is the political process approach. It focuses on the interaction between collective action and political structure overcoming the weakness of the previous two approaches, and it is, therefore, the approach used in this thesis.

2.4 Political Process Approach

Following these initial critiques, there have been further theoretical developments aimed at overcoming weaknesses, as well as narrowing the distance with the identity-based approach. I argue that in analysing the struggle of contemporary indigenous movements in cases such as Ecuador, where they are already consolidated and recognised as political actors, the focus must be placed on the organizational challenges they face in this new phase that I call the political process of *Buen Vivir*. Emphasis is placed on the political and social terrain which nurtures the emergence of social movements (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978; Tarrow, 1994; Tilly and Tarrow, 2007), as well as on the links between micro and macro processes and the institutionalised contexts of mobilization (Diani and McAdam, 2003). These developments have led to a third approach known as the political process approach (Foweraker, 1995), which is the one applied in this thesis.

Tilly (1978, 1985), Tarrow (1989, 1994), Diani and McAdam (2003) are key references within this approach. As stated before, the main objective of this perspective is to connect collective action to political processes more explicitly. By doing so, this approach maintains a State-centric and interest-oriented perspective; that is to say, the State is still the main political authority challenged by social movements. Therefore, power, inclusion and expansion of political society are the main areas of analytical focus of this perspective. McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow's (McAdam *et al.*, 2001; Tilly and Tarrow,

2007) work on contentious politics bring together three aspects: contention (making claims to another party), collective action (joint struggles) and politics (defined by interaction with State power). In relation to this last point, Tilly and Tarrow (2007) acknowledge that it is not a *sine qua non* condition of contentious politics; struggles may arise between non-governmental actors without government involvement. However, they argue that eventually these struggles will bring local or/and national governments into play. Taken together, these three dimensions compose what they call contentious politics.

Contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interest or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, of third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action and politics (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007: 4, italics in original).

McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1988) work on mobilization networks. They define social movements as heterogeneous structures of networks, and their work represents an attempt to link micro and macro processes of mobilization, placing the focus on a meso-level of analysis. This in turn facilitates the examination of the relationship between structure and agency. The authors analyse how networks enable individual involvement and participation in social movement activities. Likewise, the interconnections established between organisations are analysed to identify how this dynamic shapes the orientations of social movements (Diani, 2003). Micromobilization contexts are formed both by networks of individuals⁵² (participating in the same social/collective activities), and by organisations of all kinds (e.g. churches and union branches). These groups or 'cell structures' (McAdam *et al.*, 1987) provide solidarity, as well as rudimentary bases for broader and complex processes of mobilization. This differentiation helps to overcome the individualistic analysis of the resource-mobilisation approach (especially Olson's narrow understanding of the 'free rider' problem) because all individuals need to be considered as embedded in networks which work as preconditions for movement formation.

An important point highlighted by this perspective is that networks not only facilitate the circulation of resources but also the circulation of meaning, which in turn helps to link what otherwise could be considered as independent or disconnected protest events.

Networks undoubtedly facilitate mechanisms like the mobilization of allocation of resources across an organisation field, the negotiation of agreed goals, the production and circulation

⁵² This may entail face-to-face interactions (participation in public/local community events), as well as participation in virtual social networks (see Oliver and Myers, 2002).

of information...at the same time, however, they also may – or may not – facilitate the circulation of meaning and mutual recognition. It is the definition of a shared identity which qualifies a movement network vis-à-vis a coalition network, and draws its boundaries (Diani, 2003: 10).

It is this circulation of meaning that enables movements to consolidate a shared identity establishing in turn their very boundaries (them/us, analysed in Chapter 4). This understanding of networks avoids a narrow instrumental analysis of what otherwise would be coalition alliances and brings culture back to the study of contentious politics. However, the boundaries set by a shared identity should not be thought of as permanent but flexible and unstable. In this sense, looking at network patterns facilitates the identification of those processes of segmentation within movements (as it is currently happening within the indigenous movement, analysed in Chapter 5), as well as processes of centralization (Diani, 2003). Likewise, it enables the identification of alliances (ephemeral, *ad hoc* or permanent) which groups and organisations establish in the cycle of contentious politics. Routledge (2003) explains that

...differential power relations exist within the functioning of the networks that are created. Particular actors are often dominant within networks, due to their control of key political, economic, technological resources...thus contradictions and tensions remain –either tied to the militant particularisms of particular movements or in the placing of specific actors within the network (Routledge, 2003: 337).

In relation to the main critiques directed towards the political process approach, I want to highlight two that are of considerable relevance to the Latin American context. The first one is related to the approach's main focus on 'politics as usual'. While the identity-based approach provides a good analysis of disrupting politics and of unpredictable forms of collective action, it is limited in its ability to explain how movements function once consolidated. In the case of the political process approach, this limitation is inverted. Here, the stress is placed on 'normal or routine politics', an approach which hinders the analysis of new, violent and/or open struggles:

Once it is assumed that ordinary people are able to pursue their goals through 'normal politics' the theory comes close to the idea of a generic social movement, always motivated by the same kind of grievance, always seeking a similar degree of change (Foweraker, 1995: 26).

Limiting the analysis of contentious politics as only (or mainly) directed towards the State constitutes a significant flaw of the approach, especially considering how globalization processes have redefined power relations beyond the State in the last forty years. Authors such as Hellman (1995), Davis (1999), and Armstrong and Bernstein (2008) argue that political process theory offers a structural and therefore narrow approach, which primarily

focuses on one source of power, the State. These authors argue in favor of an alternative approach that can incorporate the analysis of multiple sources of power ‘as it manifests itself in the state, other institutions [as for instance, corporations], or culture’ (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008: 76). In a similar vein, and in close relation to social movements in Latin America, Escobar (2010) puts forward the idea of a post-statist form of social power distribution. While this constitutes a good point, it is arguable that these critiques apply to *all* social movements in the Latin American context where the State still retains a prominent role and continues to be a significant interlocutor for social movements (Radcliffe, 2001; Yashar, 2007). Furthermore, the incorporation of the idea of *Buen Vivir* as a State policy framework in Ecuador can be thought as an attempt to strengthen State positionality *vis-à-vis* the challenges of indigenous movements.

Thus, by analyzing Ecuadorian indigenous movements, the context of their emergence and their current political organization in the context of *Buen Vivir* as political project, I will argue that at the core of new social movements we can find four interconnected phenomena: (i) alliances established both with national and international actors and States; (ii) the support (material and ideological resources) received from them, (iii) framing processes (the strategic production of meaning and mobilization of ideas) and (iv) political opportunities (e.g. State decentralization, constitutional reforms) presented first by democratization processes, and second by the deep crisis of the neoliberal model. Furthermore, strategic networking plays a crucial role both in the consolidation and current political organization of locally originated movements at local, national and transnational levels (Andolina *et al.*, 2005).

In order to analyze the political process of *Buen Vivir* this thesis pays great attention to the dynamic interaction between social movements and State institutions. However, the political process approach neither provide further specifications of the State nor helps to understand the particularities of this institution in the Latin American context. Considering that demands of transformation in Latin America in the 21st century, including Ecuador, have predominately targeted the State after decades of social and political (anti-neoliberal) struggles, it is important to reflect on the main characteristics of the State in the Latin American context. In this sense, many analysts define contemporary transformations as the ‘return of the State’ (Ruckert and Macdonald, 2010; Castaneda, 2006), whilst others consider that the

State has always been central in the Latin American political, economic and social scene although the changes taking place in the last decade allow us to think of it as having a new role and responsibilities (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012, 2007; Almeida and Johnston, 2006; Keck and Nera, 2006). I agree with the latter. Even in neoliberal times, when the State lost its welfarist or social responsibility, it played an important political role in the implementation of neoliberal reforms. Nonetheless, in the 1980s and 1990s this was accompanied by theoretical debates more focused on the transition to democracy, governance and political stability. Little attention was paid to the transformations of the State taking place during dictatorships and democratic governments. The 21st century, however, has brought in Latin America and particularly in Ecuador since the inclusion of *Buen Vivir* in the national constitution, a renewed debate on the nature, role and responsibilities of the State. These are discussed in the following section.

2.5 The State: conceptualisation, role, and responsibilities

The decoloniality approach (discussed in Chapter 1) considers the State as the most important instrument of colonisation. The orthodox Marxist theory of State Monopoly Capitalism (Afansyev, 1974) conceives the State as an instrument of the reproduction of capitalism, a concentration of power only at the service of the elite's interests. As will be explained in the next section, proposals arising from this understanding of the nature and role of the State are mainly related to withdrawal from institutions, the rejection of the State as a significant interlocutor and the proclaiming of local and autonomous forms of political, social and economic organisations. My point of departure is different and is mainly connected with the theoretical development put forward by Latin American Marxist authors such as Lechner (1980), Aricó (1981), Zavaleta (1990) and Thwaites Rey (2010, 2012). The definition of the State developed by these authors points to its contradictory nature as both a concentration of power and the result of the inscription of social struggles. This will be analysed in depth in the next section.

Orthodox Marxist definitions of the State characterise it as the monolithic expression of the power of the ruling class, serving the reproduction of global capitalism (Afansyev, 1974). This definition implies the rejection of the State as a political instrument and the obligation of dismantling it in order to reach a post-capitalist order. Contrary to these definitions I agree with Marxist authors such as Wright (2015, 2014), Thwaites Rey

(2012, 2010) and Clarke (1991), who indeed recognise the State as the place for the reproduction of the capitalist order, but also as the place where social and political struggles materialize. In this sense, the State deploys its contradictory nature in two dimensions: 1) on the one hand, as a concentration of power but on the other, a privileged arena for first the unfolding of disagreements and struggles between dominant and subaltern forces, and second for the construction of hegemony and counter-hegemony; and 2) on the one hand, the recognition and inclusion of subaltern forces' demands. With these (always partial) achievements, the State improves the living conditions of the demanding forces. On the other hand, these institutionalised achievements also make acceptable and legitimate the domination and reproduction of the capitalist order by the State.

The contradictory nature of the State shows the complex relationship between State and capital dynamic. But this contradiction also expresses the impact on State institutions of the intense battles forged by subaltern groups for the improvement of living conditions. Therefore, the achievements obtained in these struggles cannot be conceived only as mere reproductions of capital and colonialism (as defined by the decoloniality approach). They can also serve to strengthen the position of those demanding, as well as to sharpen their confrontation with those in power. This dynamic, therefore, can impose limits on the reproduction of capitalist society and colonialism. Nevertheless, this depends on political struggle and the results of that struggle are not guaranteed but open to a process with ebbs and flows.

The State is conceived here, therefore, as the inscription of struggles between forces, a specific way of processing and institutionalising social contradictions (Lechner, 1980; Aricó, 1981; Zavaleta, 1990; Thwaites Rey, 2010, 2012). Every State institution reveals the trace of the conflict that generated it. In this way, the process of transformation of the State has to be thought of in relation to social conflict; that is, in a relational and dynamic way. Using a Gramscian understanding of power as correlation of forces, it is argued here that power and the State are two inseparable categories. Whilst the former surpasses the limits of the latter, unfolding its effects in a wider social and political sphere, the State still represents a fundamental space for political articulation.

The State has, therefore, a relational nature. It is defined here as a set of relationships disputing and denoting the concentration of power (Poulantzas, 1991; Thwaites Rey, 2012; Garcia Linera, 2010). Its relational nature explains institutional reforms as the effect of transformations at the social level; that is to say, institutional changes are the way the State processes transformations at the social level. Even in cases where socio-political struggles do not have State transformation as a primary goal, this transformation is always the corollary of previous struggles.

2.5.1 The specificities of the State in Latin America

Lechner (1980), Zavaleta (1990) and Aricó (1981) are Latin American Marxist authors who, notwithstanding the region's heterogeneity, tried to articulate universal Marxist categories within local contexts in order to understand the specificity of the State in the region. In these works, the productive character of the State in Latin America, its foundational role in the configuration of Latin American societies, is emphasised. These authors explained that contrary to what happened in other parts of the world, the State in Latin America did not constitute itself as a superstructure product of the capitalist economic base. Both the market and the nation are produced by the State (Zavaleta, 1990). The State is not formed as the result of class conflicts, the development of internal contradictions and the formation of a hegemonic bourgeoisie. It was formed with an assigned role dictated by a colonialist metropolis as part of the international division of work (Zermeño, 1981), which determined central and peripheral States. In this way the State became responsible for the promotion of capitalist development and the production of a collective identity. In terms of development, the economy was mainly based on agrarian activities. This marked a dependence on foreign capital and the 'weaknesses' of the economic structure of most countries of the region (Salama and Mathias, 1986).

The State developed as the centre around which the idea of a nation was built. While in its origin this was tightly linked to the immediate benefit of dominant classes' interests (structural conceptualisation), it was also linked to the opportunity to internalise the demands of subaltern sectors (instrumentalist conceptualisation). These two sides of the State are related to the debate about instrumentalist vs. structural conceptualisations of the State developed by Miliband and Poulantzas (Poulantzas, 1969, 1976; Miliband, 1970, 1973). Zavaleta (1990) argues that in relation to this debate fixed positions should

be avoided. Both the instrumentalist and structural dimensions of the State should be better conceived as ‘moments’ in the history of the State in Latin America.

It is the State in Latin America that gives society its unity and representation. Given the structural heterogeneity of the region, and the lack of a strong civil society, the State became crucial to achieving social cohesion (Lechner, 1981; Landi, 1981; Oszlak, 1997). This question is important as it points to the symbolic aspect of politics and the State in Latin America. Landi (1981) argues that the process of constituting political subjects goes through a dispute over meanings, which are settled to a great extent around the centrality of the State, giving unity to the heterogeneous. In this way, the State becomes the locus where political agents finally constitute themselves.

The unity given by the State had a homogenizing effect. The ideas of ‘nation’ and ‘citizenship’ forged by Latin American States have been built upon strong processes of exclusion and repression (such as imposing Spanish as official language; excluding and disowning ways of community organisation, local forms of authority, and collective decision-making processes), and by a great economic and political dependence on external forces. Torre Rivas explains that in this way “the State was not sovereign outwards and not national inwards” (Torre Rivas, 1981: 56. Spanish in the original, author’s translation). However, in antagonistic relationship with the State, subaltern groups (such as indigenous ones) also constructed their political identity as rightful representatives of the ‘nation’, making this in turn a disputed idea. In this way, the definition of citizenship was subjected to a dynamic of conflict and interaction between subaltern and dominant classes (Burbano de Lara, 2010).

As mentioned before, this cluster of works on the State was published until the early 1990s. With the transition to democracy, theoretical concerns were more focused on the democratic regime and the political stability required rather than continuing with debates mainly focused on the State. The 21st century and the beginning of a new cycle that many have named ‘post-neoliberalism’⁵³, with new governments and leaders identifying with the left, have opened a new debate on the State in the region. This debate focuses on the

⁵³ Margheritis and Pereira, 2007; Arditi, 2008; Roberts, 2008; Luna and Filgueira, 2009; Garcia Linera, 2010; Philip and Panizza, 2011; Kennemore and Weeks, 2011; Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012; Ferrero, 2014; Yates and Bakker, 2014.

limits and possibilities of radical transformations, and puts the State at the centre. This has led many authors to consider the relevance of the State in the definition of a new national strategy of development (Bresser-Pereira, 2007), and the design of a post-neoliberal economic and social agenda.

The cases of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador are often taken as the most emblematic countries in Latin America to think postneoliberalism. The tension these governments pose to models of capitalism in the region, presenting a vision of emancipation, has mainly attracted positive analysis in their first years in power. They point to the transformation of the State in terms of a *transition to socialism*. The complexity, particularities, ambivalences and contradictions posed by these governments make apparent the necessity of thinking about the nature of that transition, if feasible: what has been done to start the transition and what remains to be done. Thwaites Rey and Ouviaña (2012) defined the transition to socialism as

The substantive necessity for subaltern sectors to transform themselves in a counter-hegemonic political subject, inhabited by diversity and with real capacity of self-government (...) (page 53).

The establishment of a dialectic relation between everyday struggles forged by subaltern groups and the final objective of complete transformation of capitalist society (...) strengthening partial demands from a perspective of emancipation and counter-hegemony (2012: 73, Spanish in the original, author's translation).

The tension these governments pose to models of capitalism in the region is linked to the typology proposed by Wright (2014, 2015) in relation to the logics of resistance to capitalism. This author elaborates four different logics of resistance according to the goal of anti-capitalist strategies, either transcending the structures of capitalism or neutralising its harms (Wright, 2014:4), and according to the target of these strategies at macro (State and other institutions) or micro level of the system (communities, organisations and individual activities). The result is the configuration of four logics of resistance to capitalism: taming capitalism (counteracting the worst harms via counteracting institutions and public policies); smashing capitalism (radical rupture with the system); escaping capitalism (creation of collective micro-alternatives avoiding political engagement); and eroding capitalism (organisation of democratic, egalitarian and participatory experiences within the cracks of the system). The typology put forward by Wright is taken in this thesis to explain the competing definitions of *Buen Vivir* and the

political projects mobilised from the top-down by the government following a State-centred strategic logic of social democracy (*State of Buen Vivir*), and from the bottom-up by the indigenous movement following a society-centred vision of insubordination (*Social Movement of Buen Vivir*). In the case of the government, the dominant logic of resistance is compatible to what Wright names as taming capitalism, pointing to the construction of counteracting institutions and public policies capable of significantly neutralising the harms produced by capitalism through regulation and redistribution (widespread poverty, unemployment, inequality, precariousness of labour forces, and environmental degradation). The one put forward by the indigenous movement is compatible with eroding capitalism, which points to emancipatory experiences based on more democratic, egalitarian, participatory relations in spaces and cracks within capitalism. The application of this typology to the study of the political process opened since the emergence of *Buen Vivir* in contemporary Ecuador allows me to avoid essentialist and static interpretations that reject any attempt of transformation by objecting that they reproduce the logic of capitalism and/or colonialism (for instance Gudynas, 2009, 2014).

In Ecuador, the government of Rafael Correa first followed the idea of ‘21st Century Socialism’, used in the region mainly by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, but later modified this to the ‘Socialism of *Buen Vivir*’. These ideas will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. They reflect the intention of these governments, as well as social movements, to put forward native post-capitalist alternatives. The competing definitions of *Buen Vivir* also show this intention. They are based in a combination of elements: centralised redistribution, market exchange, and communitarian reciprocity. However, as will be shown in Chapter 4, core elements of these definitions are vaguely defined and hold little relation with its actual implementation. In most cases, rhetoric conceals strategic rationality, which, in the case of Ecuador, gives place to accusations of betrayal, essentialism, childish activism, and so on.

To facilitate the analysis of the State within the limits of the territory, as well as its position in global relations, Thwaites Rey and Ouviaña (2012) propose differentiating between two levels: the first one relates to the State as territorially located and distinguishable from other nation-States, while at the same time being a specific node in networks linked to the global market. This level is related to the position of the State in

a regional and international network. The other level is related to the materiality of the State and the set of power relations shaping it within the territory; power relations that are not fixed and static but change according to social struggles. In this way, the State is not neutral but shapes, takes part and reproduces in itself social conflicts. This level is related to internal dynamics within a State's territory and is the level in which this thesis focuses its analysis.

In the first level, the power of manoeuvre of national States is affected by the laws and tendencies ruling the movement of capital at the global scale. In that way, multinational companies, financial networks and multilateral lending institutions interfere with and shape national economies and politics. Global markets determine the relevance of goods and services, and therefore, the productive function of national economies (main economic activities, its export capacity, indebtedness). A neoliberal understanding of this dynamic considers that States should facilitate this dynamic (Goodale and Postero, 2013). That was the case during the 1990s when neoliberal policies attempted to adapt national structures to the logic of circulation of capital. For this reason, even from a critical perspective, analysts have posed globalisation as an unstoppable process and national States irrelevant as spaces of political construction. From this perspective, it is better to implement social and political strategies at the local level and away from the struggle for State power (Dinerstein, 2010; Holloway, 2005). However, as Radcliffe puts it '[t]hese analyses of transnational politics tend to reinforce a geography in which there are only *either* 'global' *or* 'local' actors' (Radcliffe, 2001: 20; italics in the original). Conversely, authors such as Agnew and Stuart (1995), Anderson (1995), Smith and Guarnizo (1998), Yashar (1999, 2007), Radcliffe (2001), Arditi (2008), and Andolina *et al.* (2009) have restated the central importance of the State in shaping alternatives to neoliberal globalisation. Furthermore, processes of regional integration (Mercosur, Alba) have been driven by national States to reinforce their relative autonomy and decision-making capacity, as well as to penetrate the global economy.

The second level of analysis, the one taken in this thesis, refers to the State's capacity to impose rules within its territory and on its population. It points to the exercise of domination by the State as well as the power struggle as correlation of forces within it; that is, the relation of social forces that the State both shapes and forms part of. This means that the State is not static but in constant metamorphosis. This level refers as well

to the relation (and tension) between the bureaucratic structure of the State and the government that represents it. Bureaucracy is a structural limit imposed on the actions of the government in order to ensure the reproduction of the system as such (Meier *et al.*, 2006; Clarke, 1991). However, that limit is not impenetrable and the government can affect the structures of the State with actions and policies in order to transform them. This possibility creates a dynamic between persistence and transformation of the ways to manage the common good.

In this sense, the current debate on the State revises old dichotomies usually presented as alternative and mutually exclusive: violent or pacific takeover of power; reform or revolution; transformation ‘within’ capitalist society or creation *ex novo* after the conquest of power; institutional participation or anti-state antagonism. In the case of Ecuador, the particular relationship of indigenous movements *vis-à-vis* the State in the context of the rise of *Buen Vivir* has given place so far to a dichotomous position and reductive representations: either *Buen Vivir* represents the celebration of radical emancipation, or it represents the co-optation by the government and the State in order to maintain the status quo. In other words, either *Buen Vivir* is the vehicle for ‘indigenous peoples’ struggles against universal kind of oppressions, with a common agenda of autonomy’ (Postero and Zamosc, 2004: 3), or its political manipulation exposes the essential oppressive nature of the state (Basabe-Serrano 2009; Freidenberg, 2012). I do not see sufficient analytical depth or rigour in framing this problem as indigenous peoples versus or beyond the State, or resistance versus co-optation. This thesis argues that *Buen Vivir* is neither only politically co-optation nor only essentially liberating. On the contrary, it argues that it embodies an ambivalent meaning in which power relations between indigenous social movements and the State are put into practice in a way that is transforming the political process in Ecuador. The political process of *Buen Vivir* brings together social indigenous movements and the State, and this thesis focuses the analysis on the particular characteristics of this relationship in the Ecuadorian context. In the next section I discuss the dilemmas encompassed in this relationship.

2.5.2 The State and Social Movements: dilemmas of a necessary relationship

Popular participation in the definition and management of collective matters is important in any dynamic of transformation (Becker, 2008). However, participation does not mean permanent mobilization and deliberation of the masses, or a direct and permanent

involvement on common issues (Jessop, 2008). The moments of greatest participation usually coincide with critical periods, when diverse demands come together precipitating popular involvement, as it was the case of the Constituent Assembly in Ecuador. After reaching its highest point, this process of participation starts to decline either because matters under discussion are (gradually or not) absorbed by State processes, or because the struggle is defeated. There is, therefore, a tension between participation and delegation, which becomes important for the management of common matters (Saint-Upéry, 2004). In order to balance these two political actions, the existence of institutional arrangements and governmental functions that do not demean delegation as something that reinforces the subordination of majorities is central. For Garcia Linera (2013, 2010) this constitutes a challenge due to the intersection of two different logics. On the one hand, the State implies a concentration of decisions on the management of the public (monolithic power), whilst social movements put forward a practice of democratization of decisions and a continuous socialization of deliberations on common issues. This implies the intersection of vertical and horizontal dynamics.

Popular participation of social movements in State institutions has been questioned mainly due to the danger of co-optation by the dominant sector of their leaders, political banners, demands and proposals (Lapegna, 2014). This assumption is based on the rigid division between the social and the political (the political conceived as the arrangement of State institutions, public policies and electoral competition). Co-optation can imply the loss of social movements capacity to mobilize, struggle and organise autonomously. Authors conceiving co-optation as an inevitable effect of a social movement's participation in the State (Piven and Cloward, 1979; Zibechi, 2004; Hardt and Negri, 2005; Holloway, 2010; Webber and Carr, 2013) advocate the political organisation of acting minorities, who refuse to become a majority and take government, beyond the State. In this way, these acting minorities oppose political power with the anti-power ethos of the social sphere. Hardt and Negri (2004), for instance, call these acting minorities 'Multitude', and argue that emancipation from the State comes with the exodus from all the places of power (Mouffe, 2013). "Radical politics is envisaged, according to this approach, in terms of a 'withdrawal' from existing institutions so as to foster the self-organisation of the Multitude" (Mouffe, 2013:71).

Conversely, a group of authors⁵⁴ working on social movements in Latin America, and more specifically in Ecuador, argue that it is at the level of the State that movements wage their principal struggles. Moreover, it is argued here that total independence from the State does not guarantee but actually hinders the capacity of social movements to productively express their demands and disagreements if these are not, in some way, translated into State policies (Amenta, 2006; Trumpy, 2008). Ramirez (2014) argues that not taking the State as the main interlocutor usually reduces social movements' demands and scope of action to a micro-arena, which can lead to the isolation of the movement.

2.5.3 Autonomy and self-determination

Having said this, it is important to differentiate levels and mechanisms of autonomy. Whilst autonomy can be defined as the mechanism that allows legally recognised groups to exercise self-determination over matters relevant to the group, the State maintains its power over matters of common interest (Ghai, 2000; Wheatley, 2009; Kuppe, 2010). That is, autonomy does not necessarily mean separate government but a formal division of political authority within the State. The recognition of autonomy is an act of delegation of public functions from the State to the autonomous entity. Autonomous groups are predominately organised according to specific characteristics (cultural, linguistic, historic), and are settled in delimited areas. This marks a close relation between autonomy and territory. This vision of autonomy is particularly close to the one demanded by the indigenous movement (discussed in Chapter 4).

Whilst there is no international universal right of autonomy nor a general standard definition, authors such as Hannikainen (1998) and Hannum and Lillich (1980) define the exercise of autonomy as the existence of legislative power mainly applied to local matters such as health, education, social welfare, local tax, local economy and trade, environmental protection, and the organisation and structure of local government; the existence of executive power in charge to apply laws and regional norms; a judicial power; and participation in decision-making processes at the national level.

⁵⁴ Radcliffe, 2001; Gerlach, 2003; Otero, 2003; Postero and Zamosc, 2004; Andolina *et al*, 2005; Pallares, 2007; Clark and Becker, 2007; Lucero, 2008; Becker, 2011; Perreault and Valdivia, 2010.

The right to exercise free autonomy and self-determination has been a historical demand of indigenous peoples. In 2007, after more than 20 years of negotiation, the UN approved the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, recognising autonomy and self-determination as human collective rights. The main objectives of the Declaration are: to overcome colonialist practices, protect cultural particularities (breaking with cultural homogeneity), to recognise indigenous institutions, and finally, to guarantee non-discrimination towards indigenous peoples. The Declaration does not establish, however, the scope of responsibilities of autonomous regimes, arguing that this cannot be predetermined in a homogenous and definitive way (Gonzales *et al.*, 2010). An indigenous autonomous regime should be adapted to the needs of indigenous peoples, the political context of the country and its judicial system.

In the case of Ecuador, autonomy has been a historical demand of the indigenous movement and is included in their political project represented by *Buen Vivir* and the construction of a Plurinational State. CONAIE defines autonomy as including three dimensions: (i) the recognition of cultural diversity; (ii) a radical transformation of the State and its institutions, as well as national political, economic and cultural structures; and (iii) the recognition of indigenous governments and institutions (CONAIE, 2007, 2012). Autonomy for Ecuadorian indigenous peoples means to rethink the State, its foundation and nature, whilst recognising the existence of nationalities within it. It does not imply the separation of these nationalities, but devolution of powers to their governments. The indigenous movement is not demanding complete independence from the State or refusing to participate in its institutions, but actually pointing to its transformation (Saint-Upéry, 2004; Ospina Peralta, 2010). In fact, the relationship between the movement and the State navigates between options that intersect at different points: opposing the power of the State, becoming the power of the State, creating relative autonomous spaces of power within the State (discussed in Chapter 5).

In relation to the acknowledgment of Ecuador as a Plurinational country in the National Constitution of Montecristi, there were important disputes over the definition of 'Plurinational'. As explained before, the declaration of Ecuador as a Plurinational State has been the primary demand of the indigenous movement (Lupien, 2011; Jameson, 2011). This demand was based on the assumption that a more inclusive political system implies the recognition of its Plurinational nature. Conversely, representatives of *Alianza*

Pais 'wished to leave the term vaguely defined; essentially ensuring that it would remain on the level of rhetoric without any significant substance or concrete implications' (Becker, 2011: 54). On the other hand, the increasing movement of indigenous peoples from rural to urban areas, with their consequent transformation from peasants to urban workers, makes it more difficult to define autonomy in a territorial sense.

Therefore, relative autonomy from the State is needed in order to preserve social movements' capacity to disagree, defend their interests and imagine new possibilities. However, autonomy does not dissolve the dilemmas of the struggle for State power, the institutionalisation of rules of social coexistence and public deliberation, the active participation on public matters, the equitable administration of resources, and citizens' representation. The implementation and consolidation of transformative practices need, to some extent, the involvement of and collaboration with State institutions. In fact, even idealized experiences such as the ones of the Zapatistas in Mexico and the MST (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, the landless movement) in Brazil, which have been praised as successful autonomous practices, reveal ambivalence in their relationship with the State (Ferrero, 2014; Saint-Upéry, 2004). This shows that social reality is much more complex than the division between institutional power vs. communitarian autonomy.

It is argued here that State institutions are important in as much as they articulate the demands put forward by diverse collectives, converting particular demands into general policies (Arsel, 2012). To avoid the dangers of co-optation, the involvement of the State should bring together, on the one hand, officers who have the knowledge and capacity to manage public matters, and on the other hand, an active society that through social movements and organised groups not only defines demands and courses of action, but becomes engaged in their implementation. In any case, the question is to conquer and defend State institutions (a new law, a program, the creation of a specific public organism, for instance) that work in favour of popular interests, as well as to promote the existence of effective bodies of control and participation of popular forces. In order to move beyond the binary participation (equal co-optation) vs. autonomy, it is helpful to differentiate between, what Basso (1969) calls, 'subaltern participation' (the integration of popular sectors into the machinery of the capitalist State, losing, in turn, their

disruptive capacity), and ‘autonomous and antagonist participation’, which helps the social construction of the public sphere.

The understanding of the State as relational and connected to social conflict allows me to connect political structure and collective action. In what follows, I explain the main categories used in this thesis to analyse the political process of *Buen Vivir*. These three categories become useful analytical tools to understand the organisation of contentious action, as well as the political process in contemporary Ecuador. They help to capture the dynamic of the political process of *Buen Vivir* that moves from a moment of articulation to a moment of fragmentation. In this process the role of the State changes. It goes from the domination of the neoliberal model to an attempt to construct a post-neoliberal order with the State attempting to subject markets to social results. The theoretical developments made by Lechner (1980), Aricó (1981), Zavaleta (1990), Thwaites Rey (2010, 2012) helps to capture how this change takes place.

2.6 Analytical Framework

This analytical framework is based on the articulation of three distinctive but interconnected categories: (a) framing processes; (b) mobilizing structures, and (c) political opportunities (McAdam *et al*, 1996). In applying these three categories to the analysis of contentious politics in contemporary Ecuador, I change the names of these categories to (a) the Framing Process of *Buen Vivir*, (b) the Mobilising Structures of *Buen Vivir*, and (c) Mainstreaming *Buen Vivir*. There is a dynamic interaction linking the three components. They cast light on different levels of action: mainstreaming *Buen Vivir* mainly focuses on institutionalised politics, and more specifically, actions of the State. Mobilising structures, as well as framing processes, emphasise the organisational dynamic of social movements at non-institutionalised levels. These three concepts become useful analytical tools to understand the organisation of contentious action, as well as the political process in contemporary Ecuador. They help to capture the dynamic of this process. My research pays close attention to the interrelation between structural components (State) and insubordination as I consider that this dynamic relationship is the key factor to explain processes of transformation and construction of alternatives to the neoliberal model of governance.

a) Framing Processes: Framing *Buen Vivir*

This category refers to the strategic production of meaning and mobilization of ideas. The focus in this study will be placed on three inter-related dimensions: (i) the “cultural tool kits” (Swidler, 1986) on which movements draw to shape strategies of action (here cultural tool kits are understood as resources used to define and resolve problems); (ii) the efforts made by the indigenous movement and the government to construct, negotiate and use both common understandings of the world and collective action frames (Benford and Snow, 2000); and (iii) frame contestation by the major parties involved in the political process: indigenous movements, the State, counter-movements (McAdam *et al.*, 1996: 19).

Altmann (2015: 164) argues that ‘[t]here are few attempts to analyse discursive practices of social movements’. The most prominent is the approach of framing. The closer attention paid to the formation of meaning and contestation opened by the emergence of *Buen Vivir* makes Framing Processes a key analytical tool in grasping the process of contestation around this idea. In response to the critiques of the political process mainly related to the neglect of cultural factors in the organisation of collective action, authors such as Swidler (1986), Schon and Rein (1994), Zald (1996), Gamson and Meyer (1996), Triandafyllidou and Fotiou (1998), Benford and Snow (2000), Poletta and Jasper (2001), and Johnston (2002) started working on the concept of *collective action frames*. Their purpose was to go beyond the dichotomy between the prominence of either expressive (identity) or instrumental (interest) actions; i.e., between cultural practices on the one hand and political structure on the other. Conversely, the analytical purpose here is to identify the relationships (not opposition) between ‘interest and identity, strategy and identity, and politics and identity...circumstances that include cultural processes as well as structural ones’ (Poletta and Jasper, 2001: 285). This linkage between strategy and identity refers to the process of rationalisation of *Buen Vivir* (analysed in Chapter 4). Swidler (1986) understands culture as a ‘tool kit’ from which actors draw to shape strategies of action. In that sense, framing actions are defined as ‘the generation, diffusion, and functionality of mobilising and counter-mobilising ideas and meanings... [it] denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction’ (Benford and Snow, 2000: 612-614). The deployment of ideas, meanings and identities becomes, therefore, a political strategy.

Actors do not simply reflect, transport, or become determined by political and social realities, but are actually active agents in their construction and interpretation. These processes are thought of as politically strategic and, therefore, as subject to negotiation, contestation and modification (Matthes, 2011). Entman (1993: 53) explains that framing processes are about ‘selection and highlighting, and use of the highlighted elements to construct an argument about problems and their causation, evaluation, and/or solution’. The framing struggle deployed around the idea of *Buen Vivir* can be thought of as a struggle over meaning and the imposition of a dominant interpretation. Therefore, the objective is to identify which elements are highlighted and put at the centre of frames by each of the political forces in order to draw political boundaries, which can separate and determine *us* and *them* between political actors (Chapter 4).

Benford and Snow (2000) offer a detailed description of the tasks collective actors perform to frame action. The main one is *diagnostic framing*, which refers to problem identification, characterisation and interpretation. In doing so, responsible, culpable and ‘saviour’ agents are identified, as well as the source of the problem. Collective actors might identify themselves as victims of injustice and therefore, use an ‘injustice frame’ around which to organise their actions (Gamson, 1992; Klandermans *et al.*, 1999). It was shown in Chapter 1 how collective actors, more specifically, indigenous movements, in Ecuador have used different frames throughout time, referring to how problems were interpreted: ‘land frame’, ‘plurinationality frame’, and the ‘*Buen Vivir* frame’. It is in relation to the latter that this study places its focus. Arguably, for the first time in Ecuadorian history, the same idea (*Buen Vivir*) has become both a frame for collective action as well as an institutional frame. I argue that the coexistence of these two frames, differently interpreted and contested by different parties, is at the core of the political process in contemporary Ecuador. I will come back to this in detail in Chapter 4.

These framing tasks are usually performed via *discursive*, *strategic* and *contested* processes (Johnson, 1995; Steinberg, 1998; Benford and Snow, 2000). The discursive processes are related to speech acts (meetings, conferences, congresses, workshops, and so on) where frames are articulated and negotiated. The strategic processes refer to the objectives pursued by the articulation of a frame: ‘to recruit new members, to mobilize adherents, to acquire resources’ (Benford and Snow, 2000: 624). Finally, contested processes refer to the ‘politics of signification’, the meaning contestation intra-movement,

inter-movement, between the movement and the media, between the movement and opponents, and so on.

The theoretical advances made on framing analysis have provided useful analytical tools that in turn bridge the instrumental rationality of the political process approach with the expressive logic underpinning identity-oriented theory on social movements (Poletta and Jasper, 2001). This is the main reason of its use in the analysis of the strategic definitions of *Buen Vivir* in contemporary Ecuador. However, as it is shown in Chapter 4, there is a risk of overestimating framing as a unified and consensual process, which is rarely the case within social movements.

In relation to its application in the Latin American context, I agree with Altmann (2015:165-166) in that

[a]n approach to the study of social movements discourses in the Global South is yet to be constructed, and similarly the general theoretization of social movements of the Global South is heavily flawed. The most important social theorists openly declare that their work is built upon the European and North-American experience and is therefore by definition Eurocentric (...) social movements and their political and discursive strategies in the Global South differ considerably from the situation of the Global North, especially in terms of the divide between state and civil society, rurality and urbanity and the structure of social class and ethnicity [I addressed this in Chapter 2] (...) however, its focus on organizational aspects within social movements is relatively easily adaptable to other contexts.

b) Mobilizing Structures of *Buen Vivir*

This category relates to the organisational dynamics of contentious action. It defines the ways in which formal and informal ties between people can serve as solidarity and communication facilitating mobilisation. Included in this category are the mobilisation of resources by participants (both formally and informally) the structuring of networks as well as the formation of alliances (ephemeral, *ad hoc* or permanent) (Diani and McAdam, 2003), claim-making repertoires, and leadership structure. In the distinction between formal and informal forms of organisation I follow Tilly and Tarrow's (2007) differentiation between *social movements* and *social movement bases*. These authors defined social movements as 'a sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organisations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities', which form the bases of social movements (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007:8). Social movement bases refer, therefore, to the social background,

organisational resources, and cultural frameworks of contention and collective action. This thesis pays attention to both forms of organisation.

Resources for social mobilisation include ideas, time, money, means of communication, transportation, alliances with actors which in turn can bring more resources to the movement. Claim-making repertoires refer to the learned and repeated character of people's interactions when making collective claims (for example, strikes, lockouts, demonstrations). This means that innovations tend to occur in the margins. Most times, collectives' claim-making interactions are drawn from a learned set already established for their place and time. The repertoires deployed are highly influenced, in turn, by the resources available to the organisation.

In relation to the leadership structure, Morris and Staggenborg (2008: 171) define it as formed by 'strategic decision-makers who inspire and organise others to participate in collective actions'. At the same time, leaders are also responsible to link the movement to the larger society and institutionalised politics. To understand the ways by which leaders gain legitimacy and authority, many researchers (Platt and Lilley, 1994; Melucci, 1996) draw on Weber's (1968) definition of different types of leadership -bureaucratic, traditional and specifically on his definition of charismatic leadership. In relation to the latter, Weber emphasises the emotional character of the collective as well as the interactional nature of this type of leadership in the sense that members play an important role attributing charisma to leaders. In this way, the extraordinary characteristics perceived on the leader work as inspiration to members. However, this relational aspect of Weber's definition of charismatic leaders have been generally neglected as Weber's category is commonly used to refer to a personality type dispossessing members of agency as they are viewed as giving themselves up to the charismatic leader (Morris and Staggenborg, 2008). In Chapter 5, I analyse the organisational structure of both the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa. In relation to leadership, I use Weber's charismatic type to emphasise the necessity of a positive articulation between organisation and leadership. A charismatic leadership proves to be of paramount important to articulate and represent members' demands in a coherent political project. A strong organisational structure, in turn, is crucial to consolidate that political project. The particularities of the Ecuadorian case allow me to understand what happens when these two dimensions become disarticulated.

While references to macro (regional and international) organisational processes will be permanently incorporated into the study, as well as micro processes at a community level (grassroots organisations), the main focus will be on the meso organisational dynamic. This means looking at the organisational structure of Ecuadorian indigenous movements; more specifically, indigenous movements' confederation, CONAIE – an umbrella organisation formed by coalitions/networks with organisations which pursue common objectives, and their relation to the State.

c) Political Opportunities: Mainstreaming *Buen Vivir*

This factor has been worked on mainly by 'political process' scholars (Tilly, 1978; McAdams, 1982; Tarrow, 1994, 1996). It principally refers to the links between institutionalised politics and social movements; in other words, the possibilities and constraints imposed by broader political structures on social movements. McAdam (1996), for instance, lists dimensions that can be considered political opportunities:

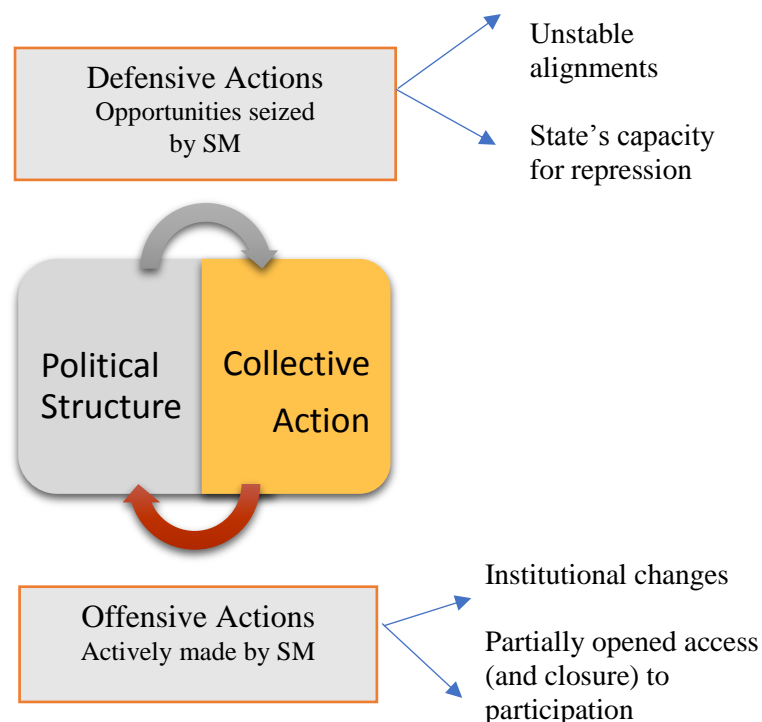
[t]he openness or closure of the institutionalized political system...The stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity...The presence or absence of elite allies...The state's capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam, 1996: 27).

The political context in which actors are embedded becomes, therefore, a key factor in explaining their emergence and development. The emergence of collective action can be explained by opportunities and constraints opened by and in the political structure, which in turn are often responses to changes taking place elsewhere. Examples of this changes on the political structure are the capacity of the State and propensity for repression, and unstable alignments - the changing fortunes of government and opposition parties, especially when signalling the possibility of new coalitions emerging (Tarrow, 1996: 55).

However, this does not mean that the evolution of collective action will continue to be determined by the political structure in which has emerged. On the contrary, once a social movement consolidates, its actions impact and transform institutionalised politics. One of the main characteristics of the political opportunity structure is, according to Tilly and Tarrow (2007), its instability which makes it prone to change.

Tilly (1978, 1985) distinguishes defensive and reactive actions. In the case of defensive actions, political opportunities are not so much the outcome of collective action as of structural processes and political structures, which are relatively independent of collective action. Conversely, once a movement has emerged and consolidated its organisation, new opportunities and constraints for the movement result from the dynamic interaction between movements and political structures (McAdam *et al.*, 1996). In this case, social movements have gained the power to change and shape their political context. In the phase of movement emergence, opportunities are there to be seized by social movements; in the phase of movement development and maturity, opportunities are actively (though not only) made by collective actors. This study will focus primarily on agents' offensive actions (Tilly, 1985). Particularly, it researches the strengths and weaknesses of Ecuadorian indigenous movements to both shape and be shaped by institutionalised politics. In this sense, the thesis remarks the relational nature of the political opportunity structure (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The relational nature of the political opportunity structure



The State forms part of the political structure and, therefore, shares its relational nature. Bright and Harding (1984: 4) argue that 'statemaking does not end once stately institutions emerge, but is continuous...[C]ontentious processes both define the state vis-

à-vis other social and economic institutions and *continually remake the state itself*' (emphasis added). Tilly and Tarrow (2007) considers that it is the involvement of the State what defines contentious actions as political. Tarrow (1996: 61) explains that '[m]ovements arise as the result of new or expanded opportunities; they signal the vulnerability of the state to collective action, thereby opening up opportunities to others; the process lead to state responses which, in one way or another, produce a new opportunity structure'. I argue in favour of a conceptualisation of the State as relational and as a platform where social conflicts are inscribed and processed by State machinery, which in turn is transformed by the process (Lechner, 1980; Aricó, 1981; Zavaleta, 1990; Thwaites Rey, 2010, 2012). This understanding goes in line with the definition given by Tilly and Tarrow (2004) of the political opportunity structure. The political process of *Buen Vivir* that moves from a moment of articulation to a moment of fragmentation. In this process the role of the State changes. It goes from the domination of the neoliberal model to an attempt to construct a post-neoliberal order with the State attempting to subject markets to social results.

2.7 Final Remarks

In this chapter I have critically reviewed the most salient debates on social movements *vis-à-vis* the State. I depart from the idea of the centrality of this relationship to considering the political process that has opened up since the emergence of *Buen Vivir*. In analysing the particularities of social movements in the context of Latin America I have shown the uncritical reception of the so-called identity-based approach, as well as the significant differences marked by the Latin American context that make this particular approach unsuitable to explain the current situation of the indigenous movement in Ecuador. I particularly argued in favour of the (selective and pragmatic) application of the approach developed by Tilly and Tarrow called political process, which brings together social movements and the State.

I explained the main categories used here as analytical framework. There is a dynamic interaction linking the three components. They cast light on different levels of action: mainstreaming *Buen Vivir* mainly focuses on institutionalised politics, and more specifically, actions of the State. Mobilising structures, as well as framing processes, emphasise the organisational dynamic of social movements at non-institutionalised levels. Within framing *Buen Vivir*, the objects of analysis are three: the production of

meaning, the strategic differentiation between forces and the positioning reached as a result of that differentiation. In relation to the mobilising structure of *Buen Vivir*, the main concepts used are leadership structure, repertoire of action, and alliances. Offensive actions, particularly institutional reforms, are analysed in relation to mainstreaming *Buen Vivir*.

These three categories become useful analytical tools to understand the organisation of contentious action, as well as the political process in contemporary Ecuador. They help to capture the dynamic of the political process of *Buen Vivir* that moves from a moment of articulation to a moment of fragmentation. In this process the role of the State changes. It goes from the domination of the neoliberal model to an attempt to construct a post-neoliberal order with the State attempting to subject markets to social results. The theoretical developments made by Lechner (1980), Aricó (1981), Zavaleta (1990), Thwaites Rey (2010, 2012) helps to capture how this change takes place. I argued in favour of a conceptualisation of the State as relational and as a platform where social conflicts are inscribed and processed by State machinery, which in turn is transformed by the process. This understanding goes in line with the definition given by Tilly and Tarrow (2004) of the political opportunity structure discussed in this chapter. In this way, I propose going beyond dichotomous thinking in the relationship between insubordination *vis-à-vis* structure (co-optation vs. emancipation; institutional power vs. communitarian autonomy; and so on) in order to capture the ambiguities and complexities of the relational processes of social transformation. These are the main conceptual lines underpinning the rationale of the thesis. In the following chapter I address the methodological features of this research: the main questions guiding it, its aims, my position as researcher, and the configuration of case studies.

3

Methodology

“...there is a girl at the door...she is a foreigner”
CONAIE’s doorman, Quito
28th July 2014, first day

Introduction

So far, I have explored the historical context that explains the rise of *Buen Vivir* to politics. In doing so, the main organisational, political and cultural features of two agents, the indigenous movement and the government of Rafael Correa, were outlined in order to show the importance of linking discourses with the practices, agency and materialities of those who mobilise them. I then discussed my main conceptual perspective on the relationship between structure (State) and social movements (insubordination). In the upcoming chapters the findings of empirical research will be presented, showing that the struggle over the meaning and implementation of *Buen Vivir* is political and moves from a first moment of political articulation to a second moment of political differentiation, fragmentation and concentration of power that redefines political boundaries in a process of renewal of political settlements.

The main objective of this chapter is to discuss the key methodological issues arising from the research approach taken in this study. I follow a qualitative research design and draw on case study analysis as my primary methodological strategy. Researching indigenous matters raises important questions that are also addressed here, mainly connected to my position as a researcher, co-participation in the process and the ultimate objective of the research. The contribution of this chapter is to make explicit how the epistemological concerns regarding the political agency of constituencies in contemporary Ecuador, as well as my position as a researcher, have shaped the methods I chose (in depth interviewing, document analysis and mass media analysis).

The structure of the chapter is divided into two main parts: in the first one I explain the decisions made regarding the design of the qualitative research approach. The second

part deals with my situation as a ‘foreigner’ and the implications this had during the research period. I then elaborate on the researcher’s position *vis-à-vis* indigenous matters.

3.1 Qualitative Research Approach: Case Study Design

Social science’s scientific inquiry has been built up on a dichotomous contrast between two clusters of study, divided in turn into five levels of analysis: ontology, epistemology, approaches, methodology, and methods (Marsh and Stoker, 1995; Bryman, 2008; Keating and della Porta, 2010). Each cluster of study frames paradigmatically different world views. One of them is usually represented by the *quantitative research strategy*, whereas its ‘opposite’ is associated with *qualitative research strategy*. This division distributes to one side of the table objectivism as ontology, positivism as epistemology, and variable-oriented research (quantitative research). On the other side we find constructivism as ontology, interpretivism as epistemology, and case-oriented research (qualitative research). The aim of the quantitative approach is usually defined as the search for generalisable knowledge (inductive construction of theories) whereas qualitative research points to thick description of specific-case (hypothetico-deductive approach) (Keating and della Porta, 2010: 114). While this division is not necessarily consistent, and many authors have argued in favour of a pluralistic view in research (mixed strategic research), the dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative is still pervasive in the design of research strategies (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

In this study, I follow a qualitative research design and draw on case study analysis as my primary methodological strategy. The rationale underpinning this choice is ontological and epistemological. On the one hand, I consider the political process opened since the emergence of *Buen Vivir* as socially constructed. This implies that in order to acquire knowledge about it the analysis needs to be mainly focused on processes and meanings, or in other words, with the meaningful interpretations of reality given by participants (Pascale, 2011) and therefore, not focused on the measurement and/or analysis of correlations between variables (for which a quantitative approach would be suitable). On the other hand, the configuration of case studies allows me the exploration of different but interconnected factors at stake in a given time and place. The configuration of a case study is guided by the interrelation and mutual constitution of theoretical concepts and empirical references (Ragin, 1994).

‘At a minimum, every study is a case study because it is an analysis of social phenomena specific to time and place’ (Ragin, 1992: 2). Ragin is referring to the various usages and meanings the term ‘case’ has acquired within social science inquiry. Notwithstanding this diversity, the common understanding of the term is associated, first, with a set of boundaries around place and time periods, and second, with qualitative research strategies (Bryman, 2008). In this sense, the term ‘case’ is usually opposed to the term ‘variable’, and therefore mirrors the traditional dichotomy between (a) in depth, intensive, small-N, qualitative research strategies that stress the *complexity* as well as the *particularity* of social phenomena (Ragin, 2000; Harvey, 2009); and (b) large-N, extensive, quantitative research strategies that stress the *variation* of social phenomena, seeking in turn the formulation of *general* laws on the matter. Several scholars have argued against such a dichotomy (Ragin, 1987, 1992, 2000; Becker, 1996; Harvey, 2009; Keating and della Porta, 2010), showing the complementary relationship between the two approaches.

[the] two styles of work do place differing emphasis on the understanding of specific historical or ethnographic cases as opposed to general laws of social interaction. But the two styles also imply one another. Every analysis of a case rests, explicitly or implicitly, on some general laws, and every general law supposes that the investigation of particular cases would show that law at work (Becker, 1996: 53-54).

However, the dichotomy persists mainly between the in-depth study of a multiplicity of aspects in a small number of cases (case-oriented research), and research of relatively few variables but on many cases (variable-oriented research) (Ragin, 2000; Bates, 2007; Pascale, 2011).

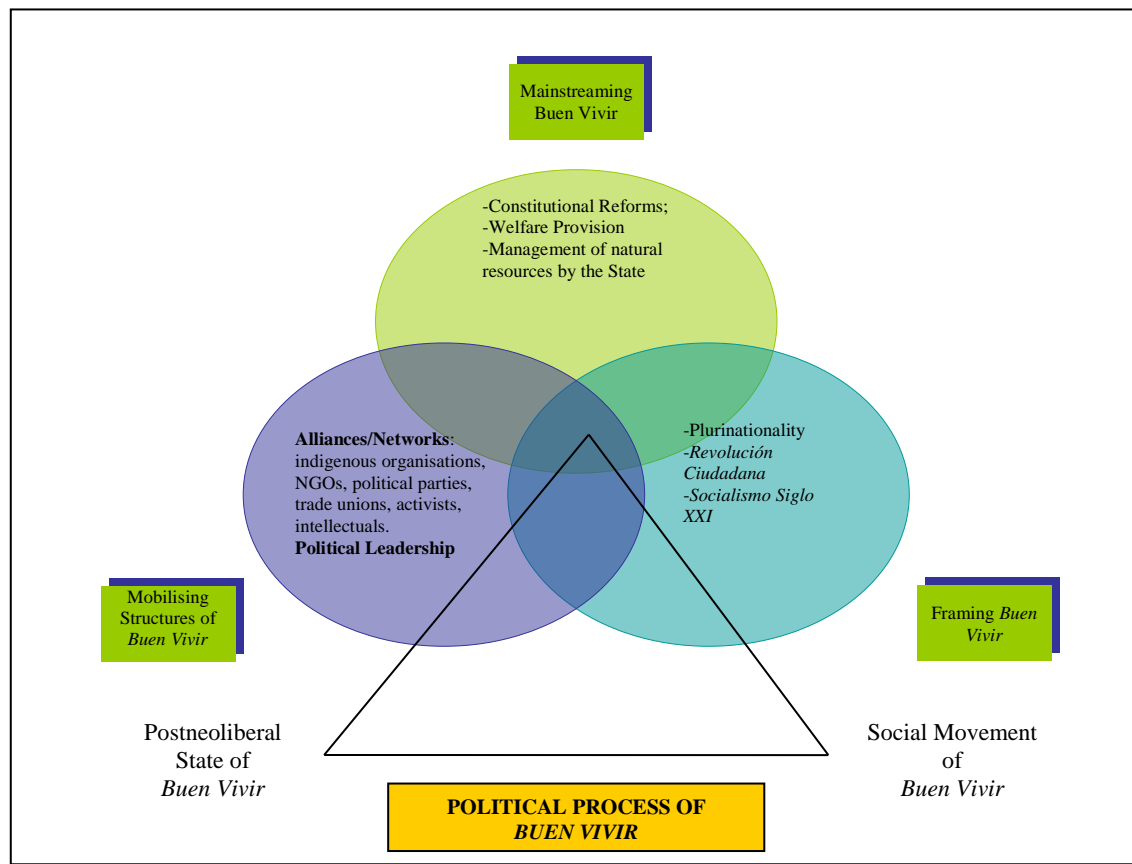
This study mainly rests on the construction of small-N case studies within contemporary Ecuador. In other words, it principally follows a configurational logic, i.e., the focus is placed on how different factors in the case particularly interconnect in a ‘concrete situation delineated in terms of time and space’ forming a total picture or representation (Carmel, 1999: 142). Ragin explains that it is by following this logic that ‘...the researcher crafts an explanation embedded in his or her representation of the case that satisfies as many theoretical implications as possible in a coherent manner’ (Ragin, 2000: 69).

As mentioned above, the configuration of a case study is guided by the interrelation and mutual constitution of theoretical concepts and empirical references. In this study, the configuration of case studies is mainly based on the articulation of three distinctive but

interconnected categories: framing *Buen Vivir*, mobilising structures of *Buen Vivir* and mainstreaming *Buen Vivir* (Figure 3). This analytical framework emphasises the dynamic interaction linking the three components. I have explained the theoretical meaning and relevance of this analytical perspective in Chapter 2. Empirically, these categories are used in this thesis to shed light on particular objects of analysis.

In the case of Framing *Buen Vivir*, I specifically analyse the meaning of the different definitions of *Buen Vivir* produced by different political groups by exploring the particular focus and distinction of these definitions. I also analyse the strategic production of differentiations which points to the positioning of the different political groups (indigenous movement and the government) in the political process opened since the emergence of *Buen Vivir*. In the case of the Mobilising Structures of *Buen Vivir*, I particularly pay attention to two aspects. The first one is leadership pointing to the political importance of this asset and its consequences for the imposition of a particular understanding of *Buen Vivir*. The second aspect is related to the construction of strategic alliances and how they affect the political objectives of these groups. Finally, Mainstreaming *Buen Vivir* points to the expression of the dynamic interaction between the indigenous movement and the State on the structure of the State. I primarily analyse two main factors that have helped the government's definition of *Buen Vivir* to become dominant. The first one is related to welfare provision and how it has affected both the organisational structure of the State and the demands put forward by the indigenous movement. The second one is related to the management of strategic natural resources by the State.

Figure 3: Case Study Configuration in Ecuador



This thesis is temporally focused on the transition from neoliberalism to the construction of a post-neoliberal order in Ecuador, focusing particularly in the period extending from 2005 to 2015. In relation to place, I chose Ecuador as the country to interrogate the relationship between the State and social movements. My original research proposal was actually based on the comparison between two countries, Ecuador and Bolivia. The selection of these countries was mainly based on the fact that they are the only two countries that included the idea of *Buen Vivir* (in the case of Bolivia is *Vivir Bien*) in their national constitutions, Ecuador in 2008 and Bolivia in 2009. In both countries this inclusion was the result of the confluence of two interrelated process: the cumulative struggles of organised indigenous social movements and the emergence of new political leaders (Rafael Correa in Ecuador and Evo Morales in Bolivia) implementing public policies through State institutions. Since then, both countries have shown power struggles related to the definition and implementation of *Buen Vivir*.

However, within the first year of my PhD I decided to drop the Bolivian case and continue studying the case of Ecuador. I based this decision on one main theoretical concern related to the design of a comparative approach that would have forced me to pay less attention to the specific context and more to the ways in which the cases can be contrasted (Bryman, 2008: 61). This implied in turn that from the start I would have had to adopt a clear and structured focus instead of a more open-ended one in order to establish the comparison between both countries. I decided that by choosing one country I would gain a more accurate and deep contextual understanding of the political process of *Buen Vivir*. Between Bolivia and Ecuador, I chose the latter mainly due to the reputation held by its indigenous movement and, more specifically, by the CONAIE. Expert analysts on indigenous social movements in Latin America such as Andolina, Laurie and Radcliffe (2009), Postero (2010), Becker (2008), Lucero (2006) and Van Cott (2005) agreed in considering the indigenous movement in Ecuador as the most highly organised political and social movement in Latin America and CONAIE as the most salient indigenous organisation.

Regarding the empirical focus, I concentrate on the relationship between the leading indigenous confederation in Ecuador, CONAIE including its member organisations: ECUARUNARI (Highlands), CONFENIAE (Amazon) and CONAICE (Coast), and the government of Rafael Correa. The CONAIE has a national reach, integrating federations and grassroots organisations from the highlands, coast and Amazon areas. There are other two important indigenous confederations in Ecuador, FEINE and FENOCIN. These three confederations stress different aspects of indigenous struggles. CONAIE emphasises the struggle of Ecuadorian *nacionalidades* and *pueblos*. FENOCIN emphasises the struggle of indigenous-peasant and black people. And finally, FEINE emphasises the struggle of evangelic indigenous peoples in Ecuador. I decided to focus my analysis on CONAIE due to the important role played in the indigenous struggle particularly during the 1990s, because its leaders have occupied roles in State institutions and have actively participated in the process of writing the national Constitution, and because it currently stands in clear opposition to the government of Rafael Correa.

3.2 Methods and conduct of empirical research

The methods used in this thesis are three: in depth interviewing, document analysis and mass media analysis. The selection of these methods was decided primarily according to what I was trying to find out (Table 3). First, this thesis is mainly concerned with providing understanding of how an idea is disputed and contested in order to influence power between two main agents: the indigenous movement and the government. It, therefore, pays particularly attention to the actual definitions and experiences of the agents involved: how actors give meaning to the idea of *Buen Vivir*, its rise to politics, their objectives and strategies to impose one definition, and the expression of *Buen Vivir* at institutional level. Hence, in-depth interviewing became crucial to obtain first-hand data and became the main source of data collection. Second, *Buen Vivir* has been included in legal documents such as the national constitution and two national development plans. It also works as guiding principle of important laws such as the Water Law and the Land law which have been object of debate between the government and the indigenous movement. Extensive document analysis on material produced by the organisations themselves as well as the one deriving from the State became important to identify how the documents refer to the idea of *Buen Vivir*. Finally, content analysis on mass-media outputs was carried out. The dynamic opened since the emergence of Rafael Correa as political leader and the articulation/fragmentation with the indigenous movement has been well documented on the mass media. The media has not been neutral in its reflection of this dynamic providing in turn additional material to understand the interests at stake in the political process.

Discourse analysis has been carried out in this thesis focusing on the role of discourse within contentious politics, that is, reconstructing participants' representations and meaning given to the process of making claims to another party, principally the State. This work has been primarily done by codifying qualitative data, that is, identifying main subjects and themes that have central position in discourses and represent participants' key demands. Taking a more open ended rather than a mechanistic approach to discourse analysis, the work done has enabled me to identify the articulation of already existing demands and the introduction of new ones; the diffusion of political discourses; and the relation of a given discourse with competing ones. In this way, and following Altmann's (2015: 162) work on political discourse analysis, the focus is placed on 'power effects in

a conflict-ridden network of social actors, institutional dispositifs, and knowledge stocks’.

Table 3: Analytical Perspective and Methods

Focus of Analysis	Object of Analysis	Methods
Framing <i>Buen Vivir</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaning: focus and distinction • Strategic differentiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * In-depth interviews * Document Analysis * Content Analysis of mass-media outputs
Mobilising Structures of <i>Buen Vivir</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Leadership • Strategic Alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * In-depth interviews * Document Analysis * Content Analysis of mass-media outputs
Mainstreaming <i>Buen Vivir</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure of political access Welfare Provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Document Analysis * Content Analysis of mass-media outputs

Whilst in Quito interviewing (total number: 40 interviews, see Appendix) was conducted with the elites within each sector: the indigenous movement and the government. I carried out in-depth, semi-structured interviews with representatives of the most important indigenous movement’s confederation (CONAIE: Ecuarrunari, Confeniae, Conaice). I also conducted interviews with governmental officials, representatives of political movements, environmental organisations and academics. For my study, I selected a number of governmental organisations that are either directly connected with indigenous peoples, such as the Council for the Development of the Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador (CODENPE), or are involved in the articulation and implementation of *Buen Vivir* policies such as SENPLADES, the Ministry of Environment, and the National Secretariat of Policy Management (*Secretaria Nacional de Gestión de la Política*).

In the beginning of the organisation of fieldwork, sampling followed a purposive form. Cases and participants were chosen in a strategic way because they were relevant to the research questions guiding this thesis (Bryman, 2008). The elite of indigenous leaders of CONAIE, for example, were selected because of their important role within the indigenous movement as political strategists. However, once I arrived in Quito sampling followed an opportunistic approach, more specifically, I used the snowball form. Whilst following purposive sampling, some of the people I planned to interview either directly deny or cancel interviews. This is the case, for example of governmental officials working at the Secretariat of *Buen Vivir*. I contacted the head of communication of this secretariat who asked me to specify the objectives of interviews and the purpose of my work. I received later an email refusing meetings with the secretariat staff arguing my work was ‘too political’ and, therefore, not connected to the ‘social goals’ of this secretariat. After an exchange of emails and even presenting myself in the building of the secretariat to press for an interview, I did not receive positive responses. Neither I could interview some environmentalist activists connected to indigenous peoples from the Amazonia, who rejected interviews because ‘already too many researchers have used them in the past’ for interviews without engaging with their struggle. In relation to this particular issue, I discuss my position as researcher in the following section.

Notwithstanding these difficulties when trying to contact participants, whilst I was in Quito interviewees proposed and provided new contacts that resulted in meaningful, but not planned beforehand, interviews. This is the main reason I changed from a purposive to a more opportunistic form of achieving participation in interviews. This approach proved to be effective whilst doing fieldwork because it provided me with new opportunities not foreseen whilst organising the trip to Ecuador.

Before travelling to Ecuador, I attended meetings organised in London by the Ecuadorian Embassy in the UK. I developed communications with key contacts during these meetings, which were helpful in providing me with contacts in Ecuador. These meetings were: ‘Ecuador’s Citizens’ Revolution’, University College London - Institute of the Americas (3rd December 2012); ‘Celebrating Ecuador’s Citizens’ Revolution’ (12th February 2013); ‘2013 Ecuador Elections Analysis, Canning House Meetings’ (25th February 2013); ‘Ecuador’s New Economic Vision: growth, redistribution and sustainability’, University College London (12th March 2013).

Whilst in Quito, I attended several events which allowed me to engage in informal conversations with the participants as well as coordinate interviews: *Historia del Pensamiento Político Ecuatoriano* (Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana); *Parlamento de los Pueblos Andinos* (Universidad Central del Ecuador); *Acto creación de Frente Progresista Revolución Ciudadana* (sede Quito Alianza Pais); *Seminario Internacional y Foro Público: ¿Por qué es hora de hablar de Petróleo y Capitalismo en Ecuador?* (Escuela Politécnica Nacional); *Tribunal Ético Yasuni* (Yasunidos – Centro de Arte Contemporáneo).

In this study, the analysis of official documents deriving from the State was mainly focused on official reports published by governmental organisations, such as both national development plans (2009-2013 and 2013-2017). Important laws (such as the Mining Law, the Hydrocarbons Law and the Water Law) were also analysed. Governmental plans presented during the national elections in 2013 by *Alianza Pais* ('35 Proposals for the Socialism of *Buen Vivir*') and *Unidad Plurinacional de las Izquierdas*⁵⁵ (based on the construction of the 'Democratic Society of *Sumak Kawsay*'), were analysed. The particularity of the 2013 national elections in Ecuador was that for the first time in the electoral history of the country the idea of *Buen Vivir* was explicitly used in the political manifestos of these two political parties.

In relation to content analysis, I used mass-media outputs⁵⁶, primarily Ecuadorian national and local newspapers, and radio and television news programmes in order to

⁵⁵ Plurinational Unity of the Left: coalition formed by the political party *Movimiento Popular Democrático* (MPD – Popular Democratic Movement), *Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik - Nuevo Pais* (MUPP-NP, Pachakutik Movement of Plurinational Unity)⁵⁵, and *Socialismo Revolucionario* (sub-faction of *Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano*). Its presidential candidate was Alberto Acosta, a former political ally of Rafael Correa. As president of the Constituent Assembly, Acosta was jointly responsible for the articulation and incorporation of the idea of *Buen Vivir*. Today, Acosta and Correa represent opposite positions.

⁵⁶ **El Universo**: one of the most important newspapers in Ecuador. Ideology: liberal – right wing. Since 2010 in open confrontation with Rafael Correa who filed a libel complaint against the three owners of the newspaper and one journalist. The newspaper was sentenced to pay Correa US\$ 42 million in damages. The same year Correa pardoned the newspaper. **El Comercio**: Ecuador's second biggest newspaper, covering news mainly from Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca. Ideology: liberal. Opposite to Correa's government, it supports the presidential candidate Guillermo Lasso (right wing, former banker – he currently occupies the second position in opinion polls). **Ecuador en vivo.com**: online newspaper. Ideology: progressive, left-wing. It is a strong supporter of Alberto Acosta and Unidad Plurinacional de las Izquierdas. **El Telégrafo**: state-owned newspaper, it is a strong supporter of the *Revolución Ciudadana* and Rafael Correa's government. Ecuadorian radios: Radio El Telégrafo, Radio La Prensa, CRE Satelital

gather information (as well as the opinions/reactions of significant actors) about media coverage on campaign acts, demonstrations, particular conflicts, debates, and so on. Sampling was mainly based on dates (2005 – the rise of Rafael Correa as political leader – to the present). Coding was mainly based on subjects and themes.

The data gathered was primarily assessed in terms of its *validity* (Bryman, 2008). Validity is concerned with the correspondence between concepts and observations, and therefore, with the *applicability* of the former to understand the particular and the concrete (Carmel, 1999). Coding was made through two processes. The first one took place while on fieldwork, and entailed the transcription of interviews, as well as the careful examination of field notes and documents in search of key themes and tentative relations with theoretical concepts (Bryman, 2008). The second process took place after fieldwork and involved the use of computer software NVivo. Although English quotes are provided in this thesis, the transcription, coding and analysis of the material was carried out in Spanish.

As a result of qualitative thematic analysis of interviews, literature review, media outputs and document analysis, the detection of key themes allowed me to construct the four episodes around which the findings of this thesis were structured - the Constituent Assembly as a moment of articulation (Chapter 1); the Yasuni-ITT Proposal as both moment of articulation and fragmentation (Chapter 4); the new wave of mass demonstrations as moment of fragmentation (Chapter 5); and the State Social Provision via Neo-extractivism as both moment of articulation and fragmentation (Chapter 6). In this way, the construction of these episodes was the result of inductive thematic analysis, rather than being fixed in advance and used to structure interviews.

3.3 Reflections on the researcher's position: The Foreigner

On one of my first days in Quito I headed to CONAIE's headquarters. Prior to my trip to Ecuador, I opened communications by exchanging emails with one indigenous leader, Severino Sharupi (Indigenous Leader *Territorios y Tierras*, CONAIE), who would later on become a crucial contact for the development of interviews and encounters during my

560 AM, Radio Sucre, Coordinadora de Radio Popular Educativa del Ecuador; and TV Channels: Gama TV, Ecuador TV, Cablevisión, Ecuavisa, Telesur TV.

stay in Ecuador. In these emails I explained my research, its objectives and the importance of including the voices of one of the most important protagonists of the political process in Ecuador. Severino asked me to send a list of questions in order to prepare him and others who could help me with the interviews. He also told me he had read my Master's dissertation (available online) and put forward to me some provocative questions challenging my stance on the matter. This exchange was promising. It stopped, however, weeks before travelling to Quito – the main reason why I did not have an initial timetable of interviews with CONAIE's members. I decided therefore to present myself in person in order to organise the interviews.

The building housing CONAIE'S headquarters was impressive and intimidating. A symbol of the anti-neoliberal struggle in Ecuador during the 1990s, a few months after my visit it would become the focus of another bitter dispute between the government of Rafael Correa and CONAIE (Chapter 5). The massive black gate was not able to fully hide the three-floor building painted with the *whipala* (an indigenous emblem). The doorman let me in into the hall. After explaining the reason for my visit he talked to someone on the phone. He spoke mainly in Kichwa and some bits in Spanish. I only understood "...there is a girl at the door...she is foreigner". The phrase immediately floated like a menacing ghost of what my fieldwork experience could be: someone who can only observe from the door, not able to introduce herself into the indigenous experience, a foreigner in nationality, colour, language⁵⁷, customs, standpoint...the other of the otherness.

Researching on indigenous matters brings up sensitive issues. Smith (1999) argues that for indigenous peoples research is linked to European colonialism, which has excluded and marginalised them for centuries. Their knowledges, organisational forms and cultural practices have been disqualified as backwards and non-modern, and for that reason they are neglected and excluded. At the same time, they have been the 'object' of study of government officials, scientists, representatives of religious organisations, multinational organisms, NGO officials, and so on. Much has been written on indigenous peoples but little with them. In the particular case of Ecuador, the emergence of *Buen Vivir* makes their cosmology visible but at the same time the phenomenon goes beyond this

⁵⁷ My native language is Spanish.

indigenous cosmology, making a sense of lost ownership apparent in the process. This situation puts the researcher in a complicated position. How to approach indigenous people without replicating the mistakes and abuses of the past (and present)?

I was asked to wait on the second floor; indigenous leaders from all over the country were in a meeting which was about to finish. I counted twelve offices on the second floor; on the third one there was an enormous place for meetings and assemblies. Hanging on the walls, several pictures of old and new demonstrations, as well as pictures of historical leaders, gave testimony of the historical social and political struggle of this organisation. When the meeting was over, I saw indigenous leaders, women and men, coming down the stairs, all of them wearing indigenous traditional clothes. The image was imposing. Most of them were carrying briefcases and laptops. I later found out that in that meeting they were deciding the next national strike and mobilisation.

My interviews with indigenous organisations' leaders deal with specific political and organisational issues, as well as with the struggle over the meaning not only of the idea of *Sumak Kawsay* (*Buen Vivir* was barely used during the interviews) but also the meaning of the political phase that has begun since Rafael Correa came to power. The interviews were semi-structured and reflected a high level of reflexivity on the political process from the interviewee's own standpoint, about their own situation and the country's and region's context. The same happened with people I interviewed or talked to who are not identified with the indigenous cause, who openly support the government of Rafael Correa, or who participate in environmental organisations. What was striking about my fieldwork experience was that everyone I talked with (including the taxi driver or my landlady) had an opinion on the political process in contemporary Ecuador and felt a need to express it. I believe this is why it was fairly easy to organise interviews and meetings. People were disposed to talk about politics. The president of *Acción Ecológica*, an important environmental organisation in Ecuador, put it this way: "...the Ecuadorian has been historically, at least since the Liberal Revolution [1895], a political animal. The Ecuadorian loves politics, you get in a taxi and the taxi driver gives you his opinion about the Free Trade Agreement with the US." (Yvonne Yanez, *Acción Ecológica*, interview in Quito, October 2014).

I consider important a reflexive identification of the researcher's position regarding the process of research and the intellectual and epistemological dispositions produced, in this case, by the field of sociology in which this research unfolds (Flyvbjerg, 2001). In this sense, I follow Bourdieu and Wacquant's understanding of *reflexivity* which points to the systematic revision of the 'unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 40). This revision implies continuous and rigorous reflection on practices and their historical contexts, as well as on the frames of my own analysis and position.

In relation to the research on and with indigenous groups, there is a body of work that highlights a particular form of engagement. This approach to research encompasses Activist Research (Hale, 2006; Speed, 2006), Anti-oppressive research (Sandoval, 2000; Potts & Brown, 2005), and forms of Participatory Action Research (Fals Borda and Mohammad, 1991; Greenwood and Levin, 1998). These forms of research differentiate themselves *vis-à-vis* forms of social research that do not contribute directly to the implementation of radical and transformative social change via the production of valid and transformational social knowledge (Greenwood and Levin, 1998). In other words, these methodologies reject the separation of knowledge generation from action. Hale (2006) defines activist research as a political alignment with subaltern organised groups and their struggle, with whom the different phases of research are jointly designed and discussed. This means not only the denunciation of injustice and oppression by the powerful but the affirmation that knowledge is actively produced 'through a dialogue among politically situated actors' (Hale, 2006: 100), and that this process of knowledge production needs to be incorporated into the research process. This form of participation aims to alter the power relations between researchers and participants (or co-inquirers) facilitating the control of the latter on their own destinies (Potts & Brown, 2005; Nicholls, 2008). 'Injunctions for participation demand methods that reify local and lived knowledge and focus on praxis to address interests and concerns of the participants' (Nicholls, 2008: 118). In the case of activist research, focus is not only placed on the content of the knowledge produced by research, but equally on the relationship of alignment with the organised group in struggle. This implies a creative understanding of the transformational power of theory and methods within social research.

Authors such as Smith (1999), Fawcett and Hearn (2004), Hale (2006) and Nicholls (2008) argue that research involving the decolonizing moves promoted by indigenous peoples demand this type of collaborative undertaking methodology. This argument is based on the premise that ‘indigenous peoples have been systematically deprived of power... and need to reclaim it as a right’ (Baistow, 1994: 37), implying a self-determined epistemology instead of imposing one from the position of a cultural outsider. The assumption here is that decolonial (or counter-colonial) research demands the overcoming of the power relationship exercised by modern social research over its ‘objects of study’, and constructs a fundamental critique of the very foundations of modern social science (Giri, 2006).

Whilst I assert the importance of the approaches discussed above, my research departs from those that blend with the indigenous’ cause, which in my opinion tend to romanticize and mythicise the meaning of the “Indian Question”-social conflict-State relationship. I consider that in this way I avoid the temptation of considering only one collective as the exclusive agent of history and the embodiment of its truth (Coronil, 2007). This thesis focuses on the level of the relationship of indigenous confederations *vis-à-vis* the State. I focus on indigenous confederations as political actors because it is where negotiations with the State can be more clearly observed. This thesis deals with the indigenous peoples as political subjects. In the context of this research, indigenous peoples do not stand as ‘the other’ but as ‘equals’ (Becker, 2008; Schaefer, 2009). In other words, I take indigenous organisations on an equal footing with other subaltern groups because, primarily, they have not remained outside the political sphere in Ecuador. On the contrary, indigenous organisations have been very active, and have had significant influence in the Ecuadorian political decision-making process for the past 40 years (as shown in Chapter 1). They have been able to raise the “Indian Question” as a political issue through their own efforts (Andolina *et al.*, 2009). As explained in the introductory chapter of this thesis (page 21), the “Indian Question” refers to the kind of rights indigenous peoples should be granted as citizens of democratic States (Lucero, 2003; Postero and Zamosc, 2004). Albó (1991) explains that the term “Indian”, used in the past in a derogatory way, has been appropriated and its meaning subverted by indigenous peoples mainly since the 1930s when they started their political

organisation⁵⁸. Indigenous political activism also included major political acts such as forming political parties (i.e., adopting Western forms of political organisation) and lending support to a military coup against Mahuad's government in 2000, as well as participating in State institutions. Hence, while indigenous peoples suffer from many forms of exclusion and hardship in Ecuador, they are definitely neither political outsiders nor do they position themselves completely outside 'modern' political institutions.

Their achievements include public acceptance of cultural diversity, legal recognition of multiple indigenous rights and territories, political recognition of representative indigenous organisations, and the creation of institutions to manage indigenous affairs, which are often directed or influenced by indigenous representatives. Indigenous movements have also participated in popular coalitions that have challenged donor-led development initiatives and removed corrupt and unresponsive elected officials (Andolina *et al.*, 2009: 1-2).

The inclusion of the participants' standpoints and the processes of production of knowledge and reflexivity are considered here to be of paramount importance. Indeed, as will be shown in the empirical chapters (4, 5 and 6), fieldwork was an experience of co-producing knowledge. Participants' voices are valued and included together with my analysis and reflection. However, I did interview and interact with a plurality of actors standing on opposite positions. I did not align with any of them and was clear during interviews, participation in various events and informal conversations about my stance on the matter. I do not consider that the researcher can thoroughly maintain an impartial or neutral position throughout the whole research process into conflictive political situations such as the one at stake in Ecuador (as in several Latin American countries), characterised by an increasing distance and opposition between groups. It is difficult not to empathize with the struggle of indigenous peoples who have suffered injustices and hardships. However, I do consider that the processes of the construction of popular alternatives, marked by the rise of progressive governments in contemporary Latin America, exceed the struggle of one particular socio-political movement. In this sense, I acknowledge positive aspects of the government of Rafael Correa and the existence of transformations in favour of popular interests.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Pascale (2011: 8) explains that researchers should 'think about research ethics not as a set of norms to which one must conform but as a set of conditions that produce the subject

⁵⁸ As shown in Chapter 1, the term "Indian" was used to name the first indigenous organisation in Ecuador, the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (FEI, Ecuadorian Federation of Indians).

position of social researcher –the position from which it becomes possible to produce credible knowledge’. Among these conditions, *confidentiality*, *anonymity*, and *informed consent* given by individuals to participate in the research, are the main ethical concerns in this research process (Bryman, 2008) in order to do good and do not harm. I consider the first two as interrelated to one basic condition, i.e., the non-disclosure of information about identities and records. In this respect I found myself in a difficult position. I talked to people (formally and informally) who due to their position within the organisation and/or public notoriety were, first, easily identified, and second, expressly wanted to be identified. I have decided to handle this sensitive issue in a pragmatic way, with the expressed consent of participants in those cases that they were willing to be identified (the majority), and the use of pseudonyms in the cases of those who expressed their desire to remain anonymous (Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association, 2002⁵⁹). In relation to the informed consent of participants, further to the explicit disclosure of the objectives of my research avoiding deceptive practices, I used ‘consent forms’ when appropriate. I therefore obtained a combination of formal written consent and informal verbal consent from the participants, informing participants of their right to withdraw from this research at any time.

3.5 Final Remarks

Wittgenstein’s lesson (1980) says that ‘nothing we do can be defended absolutely and finally. But only by reference to something else that is not questioned’. There are strong normative positions in relation to indigenous issues, which aim to challenge power dynamics through research. Researching indigenous matters brings up sensitive aspects. Whilst I acknowledge this, my stance is marked by my epistemological concerns guiding this research. These epistemological concerns deal with the indigenous peoples as political subjects. In this context, indigenous peoples do not stand as ‘the other’ but as ‘equals’. In other words, I take indigenous organisations on an equal footing with other subaltern groups because, primarily, they have not remained outside the political sphere in Ecuador. In this way, my research departs from those that blend with the indigenous’ cause, which in my opinion tend to romanticise and mythicise the meaning of the “Indian Question”-social conflict-State relationship. I consider that in this way I avoid the

⁵⁹ <http://www.britisoc.co.uk/media/27107/StatementofEthicalPractice.pdf> [Accessed July 2012].

temptation of considering only one collective as the exclusive agent of history and the embodiment of its truth.

In this chapter I also explained the criteria followed for the configuration of case studies, mainly marked by the intersection of three interrelated categories: framing *Buen Vivir*, the mobilising structures of *Buen Vivir* and mainstreaming *Buen Vivir*. In the following chapters each of these categories become prominent in the analysis: Chapter 4 is mainly focused on framing strategies of *Buen Vivir* by different political constituencies; the analysis in Chapter 5 is based on the impact of *Buen Vivir* in the organisation of contentious politics; finally, Chapter 6 deals with the impact of *Buen Vivir* at an institutional level and the opportunities opened for a new political process. This salient analytical prominence does not imply the disconnection with the other two categories, but a different emphasis determined by the analysis.

4

Buen Vivir and the appropriation of political rhetoric: the multiple uses of *Buen Vivir* in strategic differentiations

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to show the political nature of the definitions of *Buen Vivir*. The chapter deals with the rationalisation and strategic use of *Buen Vivir* to create differentiations primarily between two political forces: the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa. By process of rationalisation I refer to actions that make definitions of *Buen Vivir* consistent with the political objectives of the groups supporting them. The process of rationalisation points to the expansion of the instrumental and strategic rationality (Habermas, 1986; Domingues, 2000; Gane, 2002). The argument here is that the battle over the meaning and ownership of this political concept serves to define political boundaries (us and them) between stakeholders who are in competition for positions of power in a process of renewal of political settlements in Ecuador.

In the context of the Constituent Assembly (2006), *Buen Vivir* became disputed and, in doing so, it instituted in practice a real space for democratic deliberation. It was in this space of deliberation that *Buen Vivir* became the symbol of an alternative to mainstream neoliberalism sought by the Ecuadorian people. Whilst its existence can be traced back before the Constituent Assembly in different publications written mainly by indigenous intellectuals (GTZ, 2002; Viteri, 2002; Acosta, 2002; Sarayaku, 2003), it is at the Constituent Assembly that this idea became representative of broad demands for change, and a central political concept around which different discourses were woven (Hidalgo-Capitan and Cubillo-Guevara, 2014).

Different political forces have tried to appropriate the idea since its gestation and inclusion in the national Constitution. Groups of intellectuals, grassroots activists, and indigenous and civil society organisations, international networks of academics, and members of political parties are among the multiplicity of social agents re-designing the

principles, nature and meanings of *Buen Vivir*. So far, *Buen Vivir* has been used to represent an alternative to the neoliberal model, to development and its idea of progress and modernisation, to the capitalist system and even modernity as a whole. It is in this context that *Buen Vivir* has emerged as a socio-political and identitarian concept (Altmann, 2015). The idea of *Buen Vivir* has been subjected to a dispute over its meaning that reveals a process of rationalisation that has ultimately determined political actors' strategic positioning.

The power struggle that has developed since the foundation of the Constituent Assembly shows that there is no common understanding of *Buen Vivir*. On the contrary, it is possible to identify a number of definitions stressing and highlighting different aspects according to the interests, goals, and visions of the actors supporting them. In Chapters 2 and 3 I referred to this as 'framing *Buen Vivir*'. In the struggle over meaning, actors claim ownership of the idea and its definition, and seek to discredit the definition given by opponents. This makes *Buen Vivir* a porous and malleable concept, a symbol of the struggles at stake in contemporary Ecuador, which redefine areas of inclusion in and exclusion from the political sphere.

4.1 Framing *Buen Vivir*: legitimacy and authenticity in dispute

Both the indigenous movement and the government of Rafael Correa have been fundamental for the rise and consolidation of *Buen Vivir* as the proxy upon which different socio-political agents in Ecuador have defined their position within the post-neoliberal turn dominating the country and region. The increasing conflicts that have unfolded in the attempts to implement *Buen Vivir* have led to a greater distance between these two actors. Each of them defines the concept in different ways according to their interests, goals, and political battles, defending the legitimacy of the frame they mobilise while discrediting the frames held by political opponents. In this way, the definition and mobilisation of the frameworks of *Buen Vivir* becomes a powerful tool to create and openly redefine subjective positions in the political and social arena in Ecuador.

The debate that emerged with the writing of the new constitution in Ecuador comprehended the discussion over the type of society and the type of State to be constructed (Acosta, 2008; Gudynas, 2009). Constitutional reforms are not new in Ecuador. By 2006, the country already had 20 national constitutions (SENPLADES,

2010: 27). Notwithstanding this, the writing of the Constitution of Montecristi (2008) was different due to the context of social uprising in which the decision to call for a Constituent Assembly was made. By that time, the country had suffered the worst economic crisis in its history, an important portion of the population was already living abroad, and the uprising of the *forajidos* heralded the end of the neoliberal model of governance and growth. The writing of the new Constitution therefore reflected the desire for transformation of a plurality of agents who pushed to include their demands in the new legal document (Muñoz, 2008).

The participation of a plurality of agents in the definition of proposals and the articles to be included in the Constitution triggered new conflicts. The first signs of tension were apparent between a sector of the indigenous movement represented by the CONAIE and representatives of *Alianza Pais* in relation to what forces set up the agenda of the Assembly. As explained in Chapter 1, the Constituent Assembly comprised 130 delegates. *Alianza Pais* obtained 74 seats whilst leftist parties (included indigenous party *Pachakutik*) only obtained 13 seats. Even though indigenous and leftist organisations secured minimum representation in the Assembly, their demands overwhelmingly set the agenda of the assembly as they became part of the agenda of *Alianza Pais*. These demands included the acknowledgement of Ecuador as Plurinational; the control, regulation and restriction of the extractive economy; and the implementation of land redistribution, among others. The disparity in the number of representatives created friction between the government and the indigenous movement. Among the latter it generated suspicion of the government's appropriation of their demands and their exclusion from places of deliberation and decision-making. In the interviews undertaken for this research, indigenous leaders were clear that during this process what was at stake was the definition of hegemonic positions in order to guide the process of transformation.

These hegemonic positions are related to the imposition of a dominant interpretation. As will be analysed in the following sections, there are competing understandings of *Buen Vivir* that reflect particular visions of the State, the economy, development, political participation and so on. Hegemonic practices arise when dispersed elements come together with the purpose of assembling a conception of the world that will become (temporarily and partially) dominant while articulating different interests: 'the theory of hegemony is about how a social element can discursively transform its particular social

boundaries into the boundary of the community' (Pessoa, 2003: 486). Hegemony counteracts the openness of the social system via the formation of nodal points or systems of meaning (discourse) that are the result of political struggles. Martin (2002: 25) states that

Dominant discourses succeed by displacing alternative modes of argument and forms of activity; by marginalising radically different discourses; by naturalising their hierarchies and exclusions presenting them in the form of 'common sense'; and by effacing the traces of their own contingency.

I argue that the struggle at stake in Ecuador is for the definition of a hegemonic understanding of *Buen Vivir*. The dispute is played out between three main interpretations. In this chapter I identify three different ways to frame *Buen Vivir*: (1) the Pluralist *Sumak Kawsay* (mobilised by the indigenous movement opposing Correa's government); (2) *Buen Vivir* as rational social transformation: the construction of the State (mobilised by the government); and finally (3) Deep *Buen Vivir*: ecology and post-development in action (mobilised by environmental activists). The analysis of this particular framework allows me to explore the second event used in this thesis, the Yasuní ITT proposal, to understand the moments of articulation and differentiation between social movements and the State. This work of distinction between alternative frames has been done mainly by drawing on the interviews (Appendix) and informal conversations carried out whilst doing fieldwork, as well as through analysis of official documents collected during this period.

4.2 Pluralist *Sumak Kawsay* – the indigenous movement

Whilst most scholars refer to the indigenous sector in Ecuador as carrying a homogeneous and unified understanding of *Sumak Kawsay* (*Buen Vivir* is barely used here), analysing the way this idea is framed by indigenous elites allows me to distinguish at least two related but different dimensions. In the first one, *Sumak Kawsay* is framed around the construction of a Plurinational State, which is placed at the heart of the frame with a strong political and pluralist vision. Current indigenous leaders of national indigenous organisations mobilise this frame. In the second one, *Sumak Kawsay* is framed around *Pachamama* as a symbol of Andean indigenous philosophy and traditional communitarian praxis. These two dimensions are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary they intersect in many points and one can even be thought of as functioning as the conceptual basis of the other. Nevertheless, in their construction different elements are strategically selected and highlighted with special emphasis, which makes them

distinctive from each other. On the other hand, those who mobilise *Sumak Kawsay* are starting to question the representativeness and political effectiveness of the second dimension, which justify in principle the division between both dimensions.

a) Pluralist *Sumak Kawsay*

The first dimension is the Pluralist *Sumak Kawsay*. It structures the idea of *Sumak Kawsay* around the construction of a Plurinational State, which at the same time is deemed as the only mechanism to guarantee the process of *Sumak Kawsay*. Here, the construction of a Plurinational State is formulated as the distribution of power and control over territories among fully recognised nationalities in a unified State. This has long been a claim of the indigenous movement, which at the same time forms the backbone of their political project (CONAIE, 2012). CONAIE identifies the Plurinational State as the only mechanism for the operationalisation of *Sumak Kawsay*. To define these ideas, current leaders of the main indigenous organisations talk about power, redistribution, food sovereignty, means of production, real participation in decision-making processes and governance.

... participation in decision-making processes on equal ground, in decisive matters for the country as national security, financial issues, justice, strategic resources like water, oil; making joint decisions would make clear the possibility of a Plurinational State... (Severino Sharupi, Indigenous Leader *Territorios y Tierras*, CONAIE - Interviewed August 2014. Author's translation)

I argue that the centrality given to the idea of the construction of a Plurinational State puts power as the heart of the frame mobilised by this sector of the indigenous movement: political power, economic power, socio-cultural power. This sector of the indigenous movement selects and highlights key elements to define the character of this distribution of power: self-determination (economic, political, socio-cultural, judicial), control over territories, real participation in decision making processes and in the implementation of collective rights, redistribution of wealth, and the management and safeguarding of critical resources.

Therefore, according to this frame the construction of a Plurinational State implies, first, the inclusion of peoples and nationalities in spaces from which they have been largely and historically excluded: State organisms and institutions, and decision-making processes. Second, it implies the restructuring of State institutions in order not only to recognise the authority of existing communal governments but also to transfer financial,

material and technical resources (decentralisation). This implies the recognition of indigenous cultural and communitarian organisations, as well as the redistribution of wealth at a deeper level. Third, it involves the recognition and strengthening of distinctive cultures within the territory: their languages, identities, practices, traditions, knowledge, and education. And fourth, it includes indigenous collective rights in a different perspective (CONAIE, 2012).

The government structure of the State in Ecuador is divided into national, provincial, and cantonal and parish governments. All of them are decentralised autonomous governments. But within *nacionalidades* and *pueblos*' logic there is another government to which indigenous respond more effectively and with more confidence, which is the communitarian government. The community administrates justice, the development of the community and its welfare. However, the State has not given financial resources to communitarian governments to administrate, which is one of the main demands of indigenous peoples. They are recognised as such but do not receive resources. In this way, indigenous leaders argue that they are not exercising real power.

The State says: 'you demanded a Plurinational State, it is already in the Constitution; you demanded collective rights, they are already in the constitution; you demanded a reconfiguration of the administrative structure of the State guided by *Sumak Kawsay*, it is there. The State says: well now, what do you want?' The peoples not only want their demands in the constitution, which is dead letter. We are demanding that Ecuadorian society's everyday praxis reflects its Plurinational and intercultural character, which is the possibility of participating in governance issues (...) First of all, we need to share power. I am not talking about power in public spaces but power to cooperate and administrate, I am talking about governing society, for example (Angel Criollo, Head of Communication, CODENPE – Interviewed August 2014 in Quito. Author's translation).

The granting of collective rights has been a key aspect of indigenous struggles (Yashar, 2005). Most of them have been nationally and internationally recognised, signed by national governments, and included in official documents. But as the quote from the previous interview shows, this is interpreted by many as 'dead letter' if they are not implemented or fulfilled. The struggle now turns from the recognition of collective rights to their implementation. And according to the interpretation of this sector of the indigenous movement, what is needed to fulfil them is power.

There is self-criticism. We fight for legal rights, which are included in the constitution. But we now know that it does not depend much on the constitution or on what is written. It depends on who is power in the country. We have forgotten to build power in the country. We have the best constitution but today we see that that is breaking apart, modified, violated. As we focused on the legal we forgot to build power at every level where you can negotiate on equal ground (Edwin Mina, Indigenous leader,

b) Cosmological *Sumak Kawsay*

I name the second dimension 'Cosmological *Sumak Kawsay*'. This refers to the epistemological and ontological basis of the formation of the State, nation, development, democracy and society according to the indigenous worldview. It is mainly defined and mobilised by indigenous intellectuals and historical leaders who stress the indigenous origin of *Sumak Kawsay*. Most of them form part of what is known as *indigenismo*, which is historically defined as a political ideology that recognises the specificity of the Indigenous Question and the right of indigenous peoples to receive special and favourable treatment in compensation of their long-standing discrimination and marginalisation (Lucero, 2008; Luis Hidalgo-Capitan *et al.*, 2014). The indigenous origin of Cosmological *Sumak Kawsay* defines its ontological difference from other understandings of the idea. Whilst this is also related to the construction of a Plurinational State, the focus here is mainly placed on the ancestral indigenous philosophy and communitarian practices as carriers of a real and radical alternative to Western modernity, the capitalist system and colonial State.

Sumak Kawsay is a different civilizing proposal, with a different knowledge and imaginary matrix, where *Pachamama* is not an object to be exploited but on the contrary, is the matrix where we have to arrange harmonically the existence of the planet (...) we point to the construction of the human being first, then the citizen. In any case, citizenship has to depart from a different concept of humanity. In Kichwa 'runa' means man, human, humanity. There is not such term in Spanish; at the same time is a word to differentiate from the white man. 'Runa' means everything, means community, your social being in the community, the environment, means our gods, imaginaries, our *cosmovision*; it is a global and integral concept of humanity. From that global concept of humanity begins the construction of the concrete, which is the commoner who lives in the community. *Sumak Kawsay* is that. It is the risk of constructing a different human condition that allows the construction of a different citizenship. How can you build citizenship out of the same values? Accumulation for example, the need to deplete to accumulate as a concept of human realization; or the concept of development itself... (Luis Macas, indigenous leader CONAIE - Interviewed August 2014 in Quito. Author's translation).

The *Pachamama* is used as a symbol representing (i) moral roots, (ii) the spiritual and transcendental elements underpinning human-nature relationships, and (iii) the new civilizing contract envisaged by the promoters of this frame.

Sumak Kawsay is an attitude of respect towards the *Pachamama* and the understanding that I live because there are others who live in me, the forest lives in me, I live because that mountain lives in me, in my spirit, in my being. Politically, it is a big utopia to construct a new civilisational stage of humanity. It is not the wellbeing born out of the wealth of capital but is born out of the harmonic coexistence with the environment, is born fundamentally out of respect and of the understanding that we

exist because there are others that make us (“Pocho” Alvarez, filmmaker– Interviewed September 2014 in Quito. Author’s translation).

Indigenous leaders and intellectuals talk about solidarity, reciprocity, harmony, and collective cooperation. In order to differentiate themselves from the use given by the State, they do not talk about *Buen Vivir* but about *Sumak Kawsay*. *Buen Vivir* represents for them the co-optation of a radical idea in order to legitimize the implementation of developmentalist policies dependent on extractive activities, which are defined as particularly detrimental to the interests and lifeworlds of indigenous communities. *Buen Vivir* is mainly referred to as mere discourse, and discourse deemed as a tool for deception. This differentiation between *Sumak Kawsay* and *Buen Vivir* is used to trace political boundaries between governmental and indigenous forces.

‘Interculturality’ (first coined by FENOCIN) is another important component of this frame. To define it, a distinction is made with multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has its origins in Western countries (Turbino, 2005). It refers mainly to the existence of a collection of singular cultures (without considering their interaction) under the dominance of one hegemonic culture (Santos, 2007). ‘Difference’ is then incorporated into already existing structures. ‘Interculturality’, as understood by indigenous peoples, can only exist in interaction with others (Garcia Linera, *et al.*, 2006). It goes beyond tolerance, respect, and recognition of diversity. It constitutes a political project (always open) pointing to the radical transformation of social institutions and relations. ‘Interculturality’ refers to the re-foundation of structures which put different logics, practices, and forms of thinking, acting and living into equitable relationships. In short, ‘interculturality’ connects different lifeworlds. Whilst this kind of interaction does not exist without conflicts or struggles over different interests, in an intercultural process the marginalisation and exclusion of any group from the process of deliberation does not take place (Bressa Florentin, 2011: 43-44).

Cosmological *Sumak Kawsay* emphasises the epistemological and ontological bases of *Sumak Kawsay*, which give us its distinctiveness and power of rupture with mainstream definitions of development, democracy, the State, and so on (Hidalgo-Capitan *et al.*, 2014). The mainstream understandings of the State are deemed as colonial and Eurocentric forms of oppression, exclusion and exploitation. The *Sumak Kawsay*

proposal aims to break with this. Here, indigenous philosophy is put above any particular or concrete demand.

In the interviews, indigenous leaders voiced their concerns over the political use, effectiveness and representativeness of a frame that puts *Pachamama* and communitarian life at the centre. Some of the interviewees even made ironic comments on the use of nature to define *Sumak Kawsay*. At the same time, some of them raise the issue of indigenous people living in the city and its impact in communitarian practices, as well as the rise of a new indigenous bourgeoisie (this point will be analysed in Chapter 5). They question the representativeness of a definition centred in communitarian life for those who, forced or out of choice, live now in the city, have an urban lifestyle, and are not longer peasants but workers. It was palpable during the interviews that the crucial question: *What does it mean to be indigenous in the 21st century?* is under discussion and revision among the indigenous elite.

On the one hand, there is an interpretation of *Sumak Kawsay* within the capitalist State. An example is when you see the sign ‘Oil is life’ in the Amazonia, that kind of *Sumak Kawsay*. Or you see big roads, motorways, the Panamericana, we can say that we are travelling in a better bus but, at the end, who benefits from that? That is the expression of *Sumak Kawsay* from the government. But on the other, there is not a *Sumak Kawsay* from indigenous communities adapted to the current situation; there is one which is a sort of cultural interpretation, an antique; one that can only be thought in an isolated, forest environment. But we need to debate about a *Sumak Kawsay* adapted to the current situation, one that proposes a real transformation of the Ecuadorian society as a whole. This is something to be debated and constructed. (Leonidas Izas, President of indigenous base organisation UNOCAN – Interviewed September 2014. Author’s translation).

Historically, we have proposed two fundamental questions: one is the redistribution of wealth and means of reproduction, that is, water and land. And on the other hand we have proposed the defence of mother earth, the *Pachamama*, as a space for life and not for business (...) The claim for autonomy implies the management of and decision-making on resources, resources for life and not as reserves (...) but there is another sector that defines this as a romantic question “let’s do it to defend the butterflies, the tree leaves” and they are not really thinking in a struggle to transform all this. This is the struggle that I mentioned before about constructing power, about being able to decide. This would be an expression of construction of power (Carmen Lozano, indigenous leader, *Seccion Mujeres* in ECUARUNARI – Interviewed August 2014. Author’s translation).

Even though historically the strength of the indigenous movement is in the rural sector, a big part of its people is already in the urban sector, not everybody lives out of the forest, hunting, and [using] the land. A lot of people are living as workers, as traders. We have to include these sectors in our structure and represent them, sectors which are not necessarily communities but trader associations, or worker unions, both peasants and urban workers. And there are other forces: gender and generational forces. We need to think a *Sumak Kawsay* that represents them as well. (Severino Sharupi, Indigenous Leader *Territorios y Tierras*, CONAIE - Interviewed August 2014. Author’s translation).

I argue that the emphasis placed by the Cosmological *Sumak Kawsay* dimension on ancestral philosophy and communitarian practices strengthens the indigenous cultural identity to the point that it risks falling into essentialising of their identity, that is, an oversimplified representation of indigenous sectors as holding radical distinctive values and primordial purity (Andolina *et al*, 2009), and neglecting the pluralist contributions to the debate on *Sumak Kawsay* (feminism, ecologist, socialism, and so on). It also implies the partial loss of political representativeness within and outside the indigenous movement. The essentialising of *Sumak Kawsay* and indigenous identity can be taken as a strategy to differentiate from other sectors that might work especially in relation to the contradictions incurred by the government (Stefanoni, 2010). In doing so, the indigenous movement claims the ‘natural’ ownership of the idea and leadership of the process of transformation. However, I argue that an emphasis on a philosophy barely known by the rest of society and, if known, with little connection to people’s everyday reality, instead of working as an inspiration, can turn into the sectionalism of a struggle that until recent years was able to represent the common interest. Becker (2010) considers that this strategy might lead to an exclusionary and reactionary position. The retraction of this indigenous sector to their identity is proving to test their political strength in a time when those in power have been able to articulate a representative (and general) alternative project.

4.3 *Buen Vivir* as Rational Social Transformation: the construction of the State – Rafael Correa and Alianza Pais

The construction of *Buen Vivir* as rational social transformation is connected to the recovery of State institutions responsible for planning and development. It is mainly mobilised by the government and its allies, with a strong technocratic and expert influence. While the recovery and revitalization of State institutions are linked to radical and progressive processes of decentralisation, consolidation of local self-governments and citizen’s participation⁶⁰, emphasis is mainly placed on the reclamation of the central State as an institution of control, planning and management (SENPLADES, 2013). In

⁶⁰ The legal foundations of this process of State transformation are included in official documents such as the *Codigo Organico de Ordenamiento Territorial, Autonomias y Descentralizacion* (COOTAD, Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization [Accessed online March 2015: <http://www.planificacion.gob.ec/sistema-de-informacion-para-los-gobiernos-autonomos-descentralizados/>] and the *Plan Nacional de Descentralizacion* (National Plan for Decentralization [Accessed online March 2015: <http://www.planificacion.gob.ec/plan-nacional-de-descentralizacion/>]).

other words, the central components of this frame are the construction, recovery and consolidation of State institutions as the pillars of the national project, reconnecting development with the State. Here, the State is presented as the privileged arena to deliberate about the common good and national interests, recovering control over the public agenda. The supremacy of partial interests (indigenous, ecologist) over a general (universal) one is interpreted as going against the national project (Ramirez, 2014).

The construction of a sovereign nation (*'la patria es de todos'*, *'volver a tener patria'*, which in many ways opposes the project of a plurinational country and the predominance of the local above the national), the elimination of poverty via the redistribution of wealth, and the guarantee of universal social rights (which for some analysts can be thought of as an attempt to establish a Welfare State in Ecuador) are at the heart of this project with one political horizon: the consolidation of the *Socialismo del Buen Vivir* or *bio-socialismo republicano* (Ramirez, 2010), informed by neo-Marxist thought like Socialism of the 21st Century (Dieterich, 2002) and approaches to development such as Human Development. Asked about the difference between the Socialism of the 21st Century, Socialism of *Buen Vivir* and traditional socialism, Rafael Correa explains:

There is no difference between the Socialism of the 21st Century and the Socialism of *Buen Vivir*. We try to find a name which expresses what we tried to define in the Constitution of Montecristi when we incorporated the concept of *Buen Vivir*. That is why we started using the name Socialism of *Buen Vivir* but they are the same thing. It keeps some similarities with the traditional socialism, for example, the idea of social justice, which are big words in Latin America...for example, the supremacy of the human being in relation to the capital; that for me is the biggest challenge of the 21st Century... socialism: what does it mean? To privilege the creation of value, not only the creation of commodities. What are the differences? Traditional socialism believed in class struggles, in dialectical materialism. Now, our soldiers are the citizens, and our bullets are the votes. We are profoundly democratic. Traditional socialism was too rigid, the same medicine for any patient. Now we have an Ecuadorian socialism, a Venezuelan, a Brazilian one...that is the main difference with the socialism of *Buen Vivir*. (Rafael Correa, interview TelesurTV⁶¹, February 2013).

The consolidation of *Buen Vivir* as representing a 'national project of the left' is seen by the promoters of this frame as fundamental to positioning themselves as representing a radical change in relation to neoliberalism, away from fiscal austerity, deregulation and primacy of financial interests over the whole of the economy. *Buen Vivir* represents here an alternative to counteract the effects triggered by the crisis of the capitalist order. However, government officials are cautious not to frame this project as a post-capitalist or post-neoliberal alternative *per se*. The need for foreign capital investment, as well as

⁶¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwD9lmBGfxM> [Accessed April 2013].

the maintenance of old and new commercial agreements with global powers, conditions the scope of economic transformation in the country. Furthermore, the contradictions and orthodox measures taken by the government of Rafael Correa (restructuring and elimination of subsidies; the increase in oil and mining exploitation; a new loan from Goldman Sachs for U\$S 400 millions, which brings the IMF back to examine the current state of the Ecuadorian economy) show that the economic turn in Ecuador can be qualified more as pragmatic than as a radical or post-capitalist alternative (BBC, 2014⁶²).

...the inclusion of *Buen Vivir* in the Constitution aroused hopes because the moment of the country determined it; we asked for alternatives to neoliberalism, to the political system, to development. But once you have the role, you have to govern inside and outside the country. You have to set limits, powers, responsibilities, you have to negotiate. And it is then that as government you have to make a decision, how are you going to insert the country into global relations? How are you going to manage the finances? You can not make a u-turn brusquely, it would be suicidal. Ecuador is standing as a sovereign country, eager to gain more autonomy and independence from super powers, but we also need to understand that we are experiencing a political struggle in a world marked by global finances; something's got to give... (Ivan Carrasco Montalvo, consultant in SENPLADES – Interviewed September 2014. Author's translation)

The economic dimension of this frame is centred in the State playing an important role in terms of investment, control and regulation. A strong fiscal discipline together with public investment is the pillar of the economic dimension of Rational *Buen Vivir*. The main financial source of funds for State investment, as well as for social spending, still comes from oil revenues. Government officials argue that it is only through exploiting natural resources that the economy can be diversified, as high natural resource revenues would allow greater investment in other areas of the economy⁶³. For the government, this reason is strong enough to dismiss many of the contradictions between its rhetoric, policies and what is included in official documents and laws in relation to environmental protection, agrarian policies, and popular participation. These points constitute the main conflict with indigenous groups, among others. In relation to the environment, Rafael Correa expressed in one of his presentations in *Enlace Ciudadano*⁶⁴

...90 per cent of our energy comes from oil, with the transport sector consuming the most. Oil goes to refineries and then is used internally for transport. We still have an energy structure that is highly polluting, unsustainable, even with fiscal cost as oil and derivatives receive state subsidies - even many derivatives have to be imported. However, Ecuador sells much more than it buys because of oil. And that is the most serious problem for the Ecuadorian economy. If we do

⁶² http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/07/140708_economia_ecuador_viraje_economico_correa_v_p.shtml?ocid=socialflow_facebook [Accessed July 2014].

⁶³ Ecuador is currently building 8 hydroelectric projects, and investing in the construction of the City of Knowledge; that is, the construction of new universities in the city of Yachay with an investment of U\$S 400 million per year. These universities will be mainly focused on research and consultancy in order to develop new technologies and the extractives industry.

⁶⁴ Enlace Ciudadano 316. https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=PeB1cPm4Hng [Accessed April 2013].

nothing, by 2020 we will have a deficit in our oil reserves, we will buy much more than we sell and will not be able to buy more. It is a very serious problem. With the oil exploration round⁶⁵ and new explorations we will have oil to export and to meet internal demand. But there are people who oppose this, they are against oil rounds because they are humanists, they love nature. Correa hates nature... they are the ones who love indigenous peoples and nature. In any case, what they are going to do is to bankrupt the country. Our way of life, our energy consumption is unsustainable if we do not find more oil for the next 10 or 15 years while we reform our energy structure. It is a matter of survival... this is one of the national objectives... we have to struggle together... (Author's translation).

In terms of oil exploitation, promoters of this frame use the case of Chevron Texaco⁶⁶ as symbol of its position against irresponsible oil extraction, the role of multinationals, State responsibility for the environment and for communities affected by these practices. The involvement of the State in legal actions taken against Chevron Texaco gives the government of Rafael Correa an important rhetorical tool (*La mano sucia de Chevron* is the slogan used by the government) to prove its environmental concerns (Davidov, 2012).

The analysis of the previous frame showed that there is no homogenous interpretation of *Buen Vivir* nor is there homogeneity of actions taken by those mobilising the frame. Similarly, in this case, those who mobilise this frame point out critiques and shortcomings at the same time. For example, in relation to popular participation, a government official working in SENPLADES (*Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo*) says that among the 12 objectives outlined by the Plan del *Buen Vivir* (2013-2017) popular participation is there as a “*purely decorative element. There is no political will from above to accept a real and critical participation. Participation is only allowed for those who say everything is fine*” (GOS1 – Interviewed August 2014, Quito. Author's translation). These critical voices coming from inside the government question how permeable is the current government to critiques coming from those who do not completely agree (or openly disagree) with the fundamental pillars defended by Correa's government. They suggest that deliberation is not open to dissent in the government.

⁶⁵ The government has initiated new oil explorations in the Ecuadorian Amazonia with the objective to assess Ecuadorian oil reserves in the near future.

⁶⁶ Texaco Petroleum Company (now part of Chevron Corp.) had oil concessions in Ecuador for almost 26 years (1967-1992). In 1992 it ended its contract and handed the concessions to Ecuadorian company Petroecuador. A year later indigenous groups from Ecuadorian Amazonia, with the support of human rights and environmentalist organisations, filed a lawsuit against Texaco. They accused the company of ‘knowingly conducting negligent environmental practices...wrecking traditional ways of life, and increasing health risks for local people (Valdivia, 2007: 42).

The delimitation of political boundaries in this case is traced between, first, the government of the *Revolución Ciudadana* and those who identify strongly with the neoliberal past in Ecuador. The government of Rafael Correa questions the credibility and legitimacy of politicians of the *partidocracia*, bankers, and corporatist groups (mainly trade union and indigenous organisations), remembering their involvement in governmental decisions during the 80s and 90s. *Prohibido olvidar* (forbidden to forget) is the main phrase used by Rafael Correa to refer to those (belonging either to the political right or left) who question current decisions of the government and who have in the past participated in controversial and unpopular actions during neoliberal times (cases of corruption, association in coups, privatisation and financial deregulation are used to exemplified this). In accordance with this, the government has recently released a campaign against the *Restauración Conservadora* (conservative restoration), accusing groups who criticise the government of attempting to destabilize the government.

The second political boundary is traced around those who strongly question the decisions of the government on environmental and economic matters. Young people forming *Yasunidos*⁶⁷ and ecologist groups are branded childish, traitors and enemies of the national project due to their opposition to extractive activities and their defence of the Yasuní-ITT proposal.

[t]he ecologists are extortionists. It is not the communities that are protesting, just a small group of terrorists. People from the Amazon support us. It is romantic environmentalists and those infantile leftists who want to destabilize government (Correa, 2007; cited in Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington: 136)

The tracing and use of these political frontiers begs questions of the government's democratic openness to plural and antagonistic positions, as well as its willingness to allow a plurality of actors to engage in public debates and participate in decision-making processes.

4.4 “Deep” *Buen Vivir*: ecology and post-development in action – environmental activists

⁶⁷ *Yasunidos* is a group of young ecologists formed after Correa's government decision of exploiting the Yasuní ITT (August 2013). They were responsible for the collection of signatures to call a referendum to allow popular participation in the decision over the exploitation of Yasuní. After collecting more than the signatures required by law (a total of 756,623), the *Consejo Nacional Electoral* rejected most of these forms.

The promoters of Deep *Buen Vivir* are mainly academics, environmental activists and ecological organisations. The rights of nature granted by the Constitution of Montecristi are at the centre of this frame and are closely linked to the rights of a diverse multitude of social groups (indigenous, peasants, feminists, ecologists, socialists). The fulfilment of the rights of nature is used here to represent the path to a post-development era, a post-oil economy, and a post-capitalist society. Capitalism is defined as the most extreme version of alienation, economic exploitation, inequality, coloniality of power and environmental degradation. The way to subvert this order is to focus on the local, communitarian and small-scale projects that can guarantee, first, the use of natural resources in a way that respects the natural environment; and second, the real participation of the people in both the definition and implementation of *Buen Vivir* as an alternative to development and neoliberal policies. Promoters of this frame advocate for a social and solidarity economy, agrarian reform that can guarantee food sovereignty, democratic access to land respecting collective ownership of territories, and the creation of incentives and financial credits given by the State to support small-scale projects. In addition, tourism is seen as a key economic sector that could replace extractive activities in the future.

The government of Rafael Correa is considered a betrayer of the process of change initiated in 2006. The ‘pink tide’ governments of the region are ironically depicted as complicit in international powers, which together aim to control natural resources and promote the intensification of the extractive economic model and with it, a new model of colonization.

The government of Rafael Correa (...) has changed direction, has betrayed the historical moment forged by popular and social forces that chose him as President. His mode of exercising power is more authoritarian, personalized and *caudillesco* than ever; he encourages the modernization of capitalism especially now that is in a deep crisis and the peoples desire to overcome it. A technocratic modernization of capitalism in Ecuador will not save the country from the crisis of capitalism in itself. This short-sightedness can only be understood as the result of the complicity of this government with transnational capital and with big national powers (Alberto Acosta, interview September 2014, Quito. Author’s translation).

Conscious of the ambiguities and lack of clear definitions of the idea of *Buen Vivir* (or *Sumak Kawsay*), and a lack of clear policies to achieve it and indicators to measure it, those who mobilise this frame point out the power of rupture of *Buen Vivir* in relation to hegemonic, dominant and monolithic understandings on socio-political and economic development. They conceive of *Buen Vivir* at the moment as an idea that has to be

constructed and re-constructed by the participation of a plurality of actors, but yet already showing its provocative power to deconstruct ‘hegemonic truths’. For this reason, and in a similar way as for the frame mobilised by the indigenous sector, *Buen Vivir* and *Sumak Kawsay* are separated in order to highlight the different implications of each concept according to the actors who mobilise it, and the co-optation of those actors by the forces in power in order to redefine and make it functional for conventional development.

Those who mobilised this frame have signed an open letter expressing harsh criticisms of the government⁶⁸. Contrary to the government’s accusation of the formation of a conservative restoration (composed of those who manifest their disagreement/opposition to the government), the letter denounces a lack of transformation of power structures and the delegitimizing of those opposing government decisions; it inverts the government’s charge, accusing Correa of implementing a conservative restoration, and of using State force to repress popular struggle.

Having said that, and as it happens with the frames defined by the indigenous sector, the advancements made by the government of Rafael Correa in relation to the role of the State in public investment and infrastructure are also recognised here. However, this recognition is quickly undermined: ‘we have to recognise what the government has done... BUT we cannot accept...’ In many ways, the ‘but’ employed belies significant changes in the State’s management of the economy, institutional transformation, social inclusion, and social welfare provision. It can be argued that this ‘but’ suggests that for those who question the actions of the *Revolución Ciudadana*, not only *what* the State does matters, but also *how* it does it matters. And in this ‘how’ lies the aspirations of many groups who conceive a different logic underpinning political, economic, social and cultural questions. In other words, it is not only the return of the State as a public arena of debate that is important, but also what kind of State is built and who participates in it.

⁶⁸ <http://www.ecuadorlibrered.tk/index.php/ecuador/politica/2844-carta-abierta-a-las-organizaciones-participantes-en-el-encuentro-latinoamericano-progresista> [Accessed October 2014].

4.4.1 Yasuni-ITT: moment of articulation and moment of differentiation

The frame analysed in this section, Deep *Buen Vivir*, uses the Yasuní-ITT proposal as symbol of both the struggle to overcome extractivism and protect the rights of nature and of indigenous peoples, and the co-optation and transformation of radical ideas in favour of capitalist interests. The Yasuní is a national park located in the Ecuadorian Amazon and is home to various indigenous peoples who consider the park a sacred place. In 1989, it was declared a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) due to its rich biodiversity. In 1999, part of the park was declared an 'untouchable zone', prohibiting its exploration and exploitation for natural resources⁶⁹. The Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini (ITT) is an oil field within the Yasuní park. It is estimated that the oil reserves in this area are between 846 million to 950 million barrels, representing 20 per cent of the country's oil reserves (Rival, 2010; Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011). The Yasuní-ITT initiative proposed keeping the oil in the soil in exchange for international monetary compensation.

In this thesis the Yasuni-ITT proposal is taken as one of the key episodes that help to understand the moments of articulation and differentiation between two projects of *Buen Vivir*: the Postneoliberal State of *Buen Vivir* (a top down approach that justifies extractive activities as a strategy to increase State budget to implement redistribute policies and social investment) and the Social Movement of *Buen Vivir* (a bottom up approach that stresses the importance of rights, local livelihoods and communitarian practices).

For analytical purposes I divided the proposal into two phases: the first one extends from 2007, when the proposal was launched, to 2013. The second phase goes from 2013 to 2016. In August 2013, the government of Rafael Correa cancelled the proposal by decree and authorised the exploration and exploitation of oil in the ITT. The first phase gives an account of a moment of articulation between the government of Rafael Correa and social movements, as the Yasuni-ITT proposal started as a joined project between both agents. Esperanza Martinez, co-founder of *Acción Ecológica*, an environmental organisation that

⁶⁹ SOS Yasuní:

http://www.sosyasuni.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36:yasunational-park&catid=14:yasunational-park&Itemid=26 [Accessed September 2012].

played an important role in the design of the proposal, explains this moment of articulation:

Alberto Acosta understood that this [the Yasuní ITT] was a visionary proposal; and as Rafael

Correa is an intelligent person, he realised that it would effectively give him important political benefits both at a national and international level, and it became then a public policy

(...) I think in this case it was very important that it began not as a bottom-up but as a State

policy, and from there it gained the involvement of high levels of government (...) they invested a lot in promoting this initiative in defence of the Yasuní, they did so much publicity about how well it was working, they undertook a lot... (Esperanza Martinez, Acción Ecológica, interview November 2014, Quito).

In 2007, the government put forward the Yasuní-ITT initiative, presenting it as a radical environmental and economic proposal supported in turn by the United Nations Development Programme. Ecuador's government seeks to be compensated for at least 50 per cent of the revenues it would gain by extracting the oil. The proposal was strongly publicised by the government within the country and in international forums as a firm step towards a post-oil economy. The target for both 2012 and 2013 was US\$ 291 million (Davidov, 2012). If that target was not reached, Ecuador planned to start the extraction of oil from the ITT field. The proposal encompassed, therefore, both representations of natural resources in the Amazonia: conservation and exploitation. The Yasuni-ITT proposal was successful at incorporating indigenous and environmental movements' proposals in an official discourse and at positioning those demands at an international level (Espinosa, 2013). The government of Rafael Correa urged the participation of international powers in the design of a new global governance of natural resources in order to recognise them as a common good (Krainer and Mora, 2011).

Notwithstanding the presentation of this proposal as a revolutionary alternative for the management and praise of nature, doubts were raised about the government's commitment to the project, due to internal divisions on how to manage it. Espinosa (2013) argued that the Yasuni-ITT proposal had an ambivalent and temporary discursive dominance over oil extraction. Over time, it was evident from Rafael Correa's declarations on the matter that he grew more critical of the proposal (El Comercio, 2013⁷⁰). 'It is madness to say no to natural resources, which is what part of the left is

⁷⁰ http://www.elcomercio.com/negocios/Yasuni-ITT-explotacion-petroleo-ambiente-Ecuador_0_974902709.html [Accessed January 2014].

proposing — no to oil, no to mining, no to gas, no to hydroelectric power, no to roads. This is an infantile left which can only legitimate the right'⁷¹. In August 2013 and by decree, Correa cancelled the proposal, announcing the exploration and exploitation of oil in the ITT by State-owned Company Petroamazonas.

The cancellation of the proposal marks a moment of fragmentation between the government and social movements. The Yasuní-ITT proposal lost the importance that it had at the beginning of Correa's government as a symbol of the country's revolutionary transformation, but it has not lost importance in the discourse supported by social movement and environmentalist activists. Since the announcement of its cancellation, the proposal has regained importance within the frame mobilised by environmental activists called here Deep *Buen Vivir*. In this frame, the value of Yasuní is particularly stressed, not only in terms of its biodiversity and the originality of the proposal of leaving the oil underground, but particularly because of the existence of indigenous pueblos (*waorani* territory) and uncontacted indigenous communities (*Tagareri* and *Taromenane*) in the area (Narvaez *et al*, 2013). Yvonne Yanez, co-founder of *Acción Ecológica* (interviewed in Quito, October 2014) explained that the effects that extractive activities may have on this population are considered as capable of bringing about their extermination. The frame Deep *Buen Vivir* stresses, therefore, the interrelated dimensions of the Yasuni-ITT proposal: oil production, environmental conservation, and the recognition of indigenous rights.

4.5 Final Remarks

Table 4 summarises the dimensions of the three framings of *Buen Vivir* identified and analysed in this chapter: the groups who define and support each definition, the focus and the core elements highlighted in each of them, the political objectives of each of the forces involved and the political boundaries traced between them. The analysis of these frames show not only that there is no one homogenous, monolithic and essentialising notion of *Buen Vivir*, but that is constructed and re-constructed through power struggles between different forces. It becomes apparent the strength of new and provocative ideas that are allowing the breaking up of a homogeneous and hegemonic understanding of

⁷¹ R. Correa, 'Ecuador's path', *New Left Review*, 77, 2012, p 95.

economic, social, cultural and political questions. In this sense, it is apparent that *Buen Vivir* has already affected the politics of Ecuador.

Table 4: Competing definitions of Buen Vivir: meaning and function

	Group	Meaning: Focus	Core Elements	Political Objectives	Strategic Differentiations: political boundaries
Pluralist <i>Sumak</i> <i>Kawsay</i>	Indigenous sector opposing Correa (mainly CONAIE)	*Plurinational State *Pachamama as symbol of Andean philosophy and communitarian praxis	*Self- determination *Participation *Management natural resources *Human-nature harmonic relationships * Collective cooperation, communitarian life	*Distribution of power and control over territories *New civilising contract	*Internal: questioning political representativeness *External: mainstream understanding of <i>Buen Vivir</i> by government
<i>Buen Vivir</i> as Rational Social Transformati on	Rafael Correa and <i>Alianza Pais</i>	*Recovery of central State *Socialismo del <i>Buen Vivir</i>	*National project of the left *Alternative to neoliberalism *Redistribution of wealth *Guarantee of universal social rights	*Reclamation of State as institution of control, planning and management	* Neoliberal elite: <i>partidocracia</i> , bankers, corporatist groups *Opposition: environmental and economic matters
Deep <i>Buen Vivir</i>	Academics, environmental activists and ecological organisations	*Rights of nature *Radical democracy	*Communitarian, small-scale projects *Social and solidarity economy *Food sovereignty *Agrarian reform	*Post- development era *Post-oil economy *Post-capitalist society	*government of Rafael Correa

The empirical findings of this chapter have demonstrated that political forces are strategically framing *Buen Vivir* according to their interests, goals and political battles. It is argued that *Buen Vivir* has been subjected to a process of rationalisation that allows the positioning of different forces in the political realm by creating political boundaries (us and them) between stakeholders who are in competition for positions of power in a process of renewal of political settlements in Ecuador. In this way, it is shown here the political nature of the struggle over the meaning of *Buen Vivir*.

In the following chapter, I examine the strategies put forward mainly by the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa in order to impose their own understanding of *Buen Vivir*.

5

Mobilising Structures: leadership, alliances and new wave of demonstrations

Introduction

Whilst Chapter 4 deals with the rationalisation and strategic use of *Buen Vivir* to create differentiations between political forces to establish their positions in the political process, Chapter 5 deals with the organisational dynamics developed by the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa in order to impose one particular definition. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to identify the effects that the emergence of *Buen Vivir* in the political realm has had on the organisation of contentious politics in order to impose a particular understanding on *Buen Vivir*. The current expression of such a dispute at the institutional level as well as the mainstreaming of one dominant understanding of *Buen Vivir* at the State level are going to be analysed in Chapter 6.

The Mobilising Structure of *Buen Vivir* has been defined in Chapter 2 as the ways in which formal and informal ties between people can serve as solidarity and communication facilitating mobilisation. Included in this category are the mobilisation of resources by participants (both formally and informally), the structuring of networks as well as the formation of alliances, claim-making repertoires, and leadership structure. Resources for social mobilisation include ideas, time, money, means of communication, transportation, alliances with actors which in turn can bring more resources to the movement. In relation to the resources analysed in this thesis, the role of ideas has been analysed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 deals mainly with the construction of alliances as key resource for competing groups. In the case of claim-making repertoires, this factor refers to the learned and repeated character of people's interactions when making collective claims. The repertoires deployed are highly influenced, in turn, by the resources available to the organisation. In this chapter I analyse the new wave of demonstrations. I name

them as ‘new’ because they taking place in a context of social and political stability marking a difference compared with actions in times of crisis in Ecuador (the 1990s and beginning of 2000s). The new wave of demonstrations is the third episode analysed in this thesis as a moment of articulation between different social and political actors as well as a moment of differentiation and fragmentation between these sectors and the government.

In relation to the leadership structure, as explained in Chapter 2, I follow the definition given by Morris and Staggenborg (2008: 171) as formed by ‘strategic decision-makers who inspire and organise others to participate in collective actions’. At the same time, leaders are also responsible to link the movement to the larger society and institutionalised politics. To understand the ways by which leaders gain legitimacy and authority, I draw on Weber’s (1968) definition of different types of leadership - bureaucratic, traditional and specifically, on his definition of charismatic leadership. In relation to the latter, Weber emphasises the emotional character of the collective as well as the interactional nature of this type of leadership in the sense that members play an important role attributing charisma to leaders.

The analysis of the Mobilising Structure of *Buen Vivir* is divided into two main parts: the first one comprises a discussion of the leadership structure within these two competing sectors, arguing that in the case of the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE the lack of strong political leaders who can take their idea of *Buen Vivir* beyond the indigenous sector – guaranteeing in addition the construction of institutional power – has led the movement to forge unsuccessful alliances with leaders who later betrayed them. These alliances have been detrimental to the movement’s popular legitimacy. On the other hand, Rafael Correa has shown strong leadership since his arrival on the political scene but still lacks the support of a strong organising structure, which positions him in an individualistic and overly presidential role. The second part of this analysis is mainly focused on a discussion of the strategies and tactical repertoires deployed by these two forces since the Constituent Assembly was established in order to show how they are competing for the same resources but not willing to cooperate in a joint project, leading to the stagnation of the transformative potential represented by the idea of *Buen Vivir*.

5.1 Leadership Structure

5.1.1 Political Power: from *partidocracia* to populism

In the 19th century in Ecuador, the State and the political arena were ruled by elites. Civil rights were granted only to those who met four criteria: not being subjected to a servile relationship, being a man, being over 21 years old (or being married), and being able to read and write (Burbano de Lara, 2010). This meant that a vast majority of the population were not considered free and autonomous and therefore, were not able to participate in political institutions either. Political rights were only granted to a small number of citizens, excluding broad popular sections of society from the political community (women, indigenous persons, dependent workers). Thus, civil rights and political rights were not universal but reflected the relations of political domination and social and ethnic inequality of Ecuadorian society at the time.

Until 1979, political parties had a secondary place in political and State life. Burbano de Lara (2010: 18) gives three reasons for this: the electoral strength of Velasco's populism⁷² and his anti-party rhetoric; the alternation between dictatorships and civilian governments for a long period of time; and the weakness of traditional political parties in responding to popular demands. It was with the transition to democracy that civil, political and social rights were universally granted. This inclusion adopted different modalities according to the conflicts and interaction between subaltern classes and the political elite (Echeverria, 1997; Mejia, 2002; Conaghan, 2003; Pachano, 2008). This happened concurrently with the development of a new institutional design that put political parties at the centre of the political scene. The *Ley de Partidos* (Party Law) gave political parties the monopoly of representation, excluding any other form of participation in political institutions (Verdesoto, 1991). In this way, political parties became privileged agents mediating between society and the State, as they became responsible for connecting with, organising and transferring social demands to the political domain (Echeverria, 1997).

The result of this institutional transformation was the configuration of the so called *partidocracia*, the supremacy of political parties in control of institutional politics. In the

⁷² Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra dominated the political scene during the 21st century. He was President of Ecuador for five terms: 1934-1935; 1944-1947; 1952-1956; 1960-1961; and 1968-1972.

following decades, the fragmentation and polarization existing between dominant parties and their lack of ability to set governance agreements led to the loss of legitimacy and a crisis of representation that dominated the 1990s. The way to tackle this crisis was to reform the political system, expanding presidential powers in order to enhance the governance of the system. This measure prioritized institutional settings rather than the complex dynamic between State, civil society and the market (Echeverria, 2010). The paradoxical result was more restriction of political participation.

This led to what Echeverria (2010) calls the ‘anti-politics’ movement that dominated the first period of the 2000s, which is the context out of which Rafael Correa, the *Revolución Ciudadana* and *Buen Vivir* emerged. The ‘anti-politics’ agenda points to the negation of representation through traditional political parties and the rejection of political institutions. This new phenomenon affected indigenous leaders who occupied places in State institutions as it was perceived that once in office they reproduced the same mechanisms they originally intended to abolish. The necessity of forging alliances to strengthen its position in parliament had a negative impact on the indigenous political party *Pachakutik*, which soon was perceived as part of the political establishment (Philip and Panizza, 2011). In this way, the ‘anti-politics’ agenda affected the legitimacy of the indigenous movement in leading the mediation of popular demands in the political realm. Conversely, it gave Rafael Correa the strength to become the new political leader of the *Revolución Ciudadana*, due mainly to his status as an outsider of the political establishment in Ecuador and his ability to articulate and implement the inclusionary demands historically mobilised by popular agents.

It is possible to connect the idea of ‘anti-politics’ put forward by Echeverria with a classic definition of populism as the direct relationship between the logic of social action and the configuration of the decisional field. The appeal to the ‘people’ in opposition to an oppressing order (the elites: the bankers, the *partidocracia*, the mainstream press and foreign interests) enables the configuration of a new political identity that antagonises the dominant ‘other’ (Laclau, 1977; de la Torre, 2008; Philip and Panizza, 2011). The ‘anti-politics’ moment in Ecuador, together with the gestation of the *Revolución Ciudadana* helped to establish a new idea of the ‘people’, which with its constitutive difference became the legitimate sovereign with direct influence in the decisional realm. This was accompanied by the demand of re-founding the country’s constitutional

paradigms. The vacuum left by the fall of traditional political parties, favourable macro-economic conditions (rise of oil prices), and regional transformations (such as the presence of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela implementing strong nationalist policies) opened the possibility for the rise of a new political leader able to appeal to and represent the ‘people’.

Rafael Correa was rapidly identified as a populist leader and from the beginning he constructed his political image in opposition to the elites. As explained in Chapter 4, Rafael Correa and *Alianza Pais* used this opposition as a rhetorical strategy to trace a boundary between what had been part of the political and economic establishment in Ecuador until that moment (political parties, social movement organisations, unions, bankers, and the mainstream press) and the *Revolución Ciudadana*. The label of populist has been used so far both with positive and negative connotations. The strong and charismatic leadership of Rafael Correa was salient from the very beginning, with no other figure disputing this place. In the first years of his presidency, Correa was able to create a new ‘us’: the citizens carrying out the *Revolución Ciudadana*. Therefore, populism in this case encompasses two dimensions or axes: one horizontal, formed by the emergence of demands expressed by the ‘people’; and one vertical, formed by the articulation of these demands in a political project represented by a charismatic and strong political leader (Kioupkiolis, 2014). The positive dialectic between both axes is what gives life to politics (Laclau, 2005).

However, in recent years the vertical dimension has gained importance at the expense of the horizontal one (Mazzolini, 2015). During the first years of his presidency, Rafael Correa became the nodal point articulating and implementing popular demands. However, in the last years of his mandate, an excessive personalisation and the re-emergence of hierarchies gave strength to the vertical axe, in turn weakening the importance of the horizontal one. Popular participation and the openness of spaces of deliberation have been considerably reduced. Rafael Correa alleges that his electoral victories give him and *Alianza Pais* the right of decision without the need to open debate or participation in decision-making processes. This has triggered increasing unrest among different sectors, including the indigenous movement, that call for more participation. In addition, the decline of oil prices and the consequent fall of Ecuador’s revenues have led to cuts in social spending, rising taxes and reductions in wages. These

measures have affected both the middle and working classes⁷³. Even though Rafael Correa still enjoys a 45 per cent approval rating, the increasing unrest triggered by these decisions has had a negative impact on Correa's image (CEDATOS, 2015⁷⁴).

5.1.2 Rafael Correa and *Alianza Pais*: A new political leader in search of a movement

Being an outsider was actually Rafael Correa's most valuable asset, separating him from the rest of the political class and popular actors in Ecuador. The emergence of Rafael Correa in the political arena was preceded by a profound crisis of legitimacy and representation of the political elite and institutions (Burbano de Lara, 2010). Being an outsider allowed him, first, to position himself as a redeemer leader and anti-system candidate and, second, to mark a clear antagonism between him, the *partidocracia* and those actors associated at that moment with the political establishment, which was seen as responsible for the bankruptcy of the country. As he stated in 2009, '*we have defeated the representatives of the most backward sectors of the oligarchy, the corrupt banking sector, the press compromised with the past.*'

Correa quickly identified himself as someone belonging to the left and with the people, even though his origins and trajectory were not close to popular sectors. This has led many to label Correa as a populist leader. As understood by Correa, the identity of 'the people' refers to citizens with no political or social affiliations, leaving those actors leading the popular scene until then (indigenous organisations, for example) out of the game. These actors are deemed as pursuing particular interests and, therefore, as opponents to national and general ones (Ramirez, 2014). Correa constructed a vision of himself as having a redemptive mission (de la Torre, 2013) in a context of discredited institutions and political parties. This mission did not point to a project of gradual reforms but to the re-founding of the nation towards the Socialism of *Buen Vivir*. He was quickly included by analysts such as Philip and Panizza (2011) and de la Torre (2013) in the category of new populist leaders in the region. Correa presents himself as a selfless leader who wants nothing for himself but all for the motherland. '*With no interest for us, with clean hands, burning hearts, clear minds, for the country; we work in a technical way,*

⁷³ <http://www.as-coa.org/articles/explainer-whats-behind-ecuadors-2015-protests> [Accessed September 2015].

⁷⁴ http://www.cedatos.com.ec/detalles_noticia.php?Id=185 [Accessed September 2015].

for equity, for justice' (Rafael Correa).⁷⁵ In this way, he started the reconfiguration of the political settings in Ecuador taking *Buen Vivir* to a different level of discourse.

Rafael Correa is today considered by the majority of the Ecuadorian population as the political leader who delivers unmet demands: greater wealth distribution, investment of the State in infrastructure and public spending, control over strategic resources, and social mobility. Whilst embracing socialist humanism, Correa has prioritised economic growth and particular policies over popular participation and the democratisation of institutional politics. With him, *Buen Vivir* went from a lifeworld cosmology representing an alternative to capitalism to a vision of State consolidation that emphasises the construction of a sovereign nation. This implies a significant change in trust relations between the people, politicians and institutions. Correa has been able to overturn a dramatic situation marked by '*que se vayan todos!*' (All of them out!), that is, marked by complete public distrust of politicians and institutions to convert himself and his party to one of the most popular governments in Ecuadorian history, regaining people's trust in State institutions. However, for activists in social movements Correa does not represent the left, nor do the reforms implemented by his governments. Their criticism points to his obsessive focus on the achievement of higher levels of economic performance and the actual implementation of particular policies, sacrificing popular participation in the process (Becker, 2013). In 2012, an Amnesty International report on Ecuador⁷⁶ (May-June 2012) criticised the lack of mechanisms of consultation with indigenous peoples prior to the enactment of laws (granted in the national Constitution). The report also warns of the increasing criminalisation of protest.⁷⁷

Many have defined Correa's style as a 'president in permanent campaign' (Pachano, 2007; Conaghan, 2008), an epithet based on a strong discourse of inclusion accompanying the actual implementation of government policies. The hyperactive style of Correa is expressed in his public appearances in hospitals, schools, universities, and inaugurations of new buildings and public infrastructure in different provinces. In all

⁷⁵ 2009 "Intervención presidencial en el acto de entrega de armas en el comando provincial de Manabí". Portoviejo, 12 de marzo, http://www.presidencia.gob.ec/discursos/03-12-09Discurso_entrega_armas_Manabi.pdf (Spanish in the original. Author's translation)

⁷⁶ <http://movimientos.org/imagen/amnist%C3%ADa%20ecuador.pdf> [Accessed April 2012].

⁷⁷ For instance, CONAIE's Vice-President, Jose Acacho, was arrested together with two other indigenous leaders after a protest in the province of Morona Santiago. A judge ruled that they were arbitrarily accused of terrorism, murder and sabotage. Nevertheless, they are still indicted on those charges.

these public acts, *Buen Vivir* appears, representing the change in public investment. The President's appearances come together with the broadcasting of the *Enlace Ciudadano*⁷⁸ (The Citizens' Link), which has become the main governmental communication strategy under Correa's government to advertise and explain its actions. The *Enlaces* have been also used to attack opponents of the government, marking another feature of Correa's leadership, that is, his forceful response to criticisms made of him and governmental decisions, either by the press or political adversaries.

Since 2006, Rafael Correa has won three presidential elections as the main leader of the *Revolución Ciudadana*, reflecting the strong relationship he has built up with the electorate at a national level (Table 5). In 2006, Rafael Correa won presidential elections for the first time with 56 per cent of votes. In 2009, after the approval of the new constitution, new presidential elections took place and Correa won this time with 52 per cent of votes doubling the vote share of the second-placed candidate, former president Lucio Gutierrez. Finally, in 2013, Rafael Correa and *Alianza Pais* were re-elected in power winning in 23 out of 24 provinces with 57 per cent of votes⁷⁹. In this way, *Alianza Pais* has shown its strength as a national political force.

⁷⁸ *Enlace Ciudadano* is a TV and radio show presented by Rafael Correa every Saturday since 2007. It is broadcast by state-owned TV channels Ecuador TV and Gama TV. This show is used to explain governmental actions, new projects and current affairs.

⁷⁹ *Consejo Nacional Electoral: Atlas Electoral 2009-2014*.

Table 5: Electoral performance 2009 - 2013⁸⁰

Political Organisations	National Presidential Elections 2009 (%)	Political Organisations	National Presidential Elections 2013 (%)
<i>Alianza Pais</i>	52	<i>Alianza Pais</i>	57,2
<i>Partido Sociedad Patriótica (PSP)</i>	28,2	<i>Creando Oportunidades (CREO)</i>	22,7
<i>Partido Renovador Institucional Alianza Nacional (PRIAN)</i>	11,4	<i>Partido Sociedad Patriótica</i>	6,7

Source: Consejo Nacional Electoral: Atlas Electoral 2009-2014

However, the elections for local authorities (*alcaldías* and *prefecturas*), which took place one year later in February 2014, revealed a worrying result: whilst *Alianza Pais* maintained its supremacy at a national level, it lost strategic electoral strongholds, including Quito, Azuay and Imbabura, as well as 21 out of 24 municipalities in provincial capitals and 17 out of the 20 most populated cantons in the country (CEDATOS, 2014). The results were interpreted by Correa and his people as an unexpected and adverse electoral shock. The strategy of *Alianza Pais* during the campaign relied on Correa's strong popularity as a national leader. Correa showed his support by appearing in pictures with local candidates who were also backed up by government machinery. This was shown to be insufficient by the poor performance of *Alianza Pais* at the local level. The government misread what was at stake: the dispute over local power, which is built upon local alliances with the local political elite. The electoral setback was a wake-up call for *Alianza Pais* on its weak organisational support at the local level.

The results of this election made apparent the differences between national and regional/local scales of action, as they showed discrepancies in the political management of the national and the local. Jumping scales is commonly associated with social

⁸⁰ In both national elections, 2009 and 2013, eight political organisations presented candidates for president. The table shows the performance of the three political organisations that held the most votes at the national level (*Atlas Electoral 2009-2014, Consejo Nacional Electoral*).

movements' strategies (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007). In case resources are limited and/or opportunities are closed at one level, actors can overcome this by engaging at a different level of action. Constituting a strategic move, political and social forces can go from local to regional and/or national and vice versa according to the circumstances. The indigenous movement has been able to move easily across scales (Andolina *et al.*, 2009) whilst *Alianza Pais* is resenting its weak performance at the local level. The lack of connection between national and local governments raises questions regarding the actual implementation of processes of decentralisation, interlocution and incorporation of local demands.

5.1.3 Alliances

The reaction of *Alianza Pais* to the electoral setback was immediate. In *Alianza Pais*' congress held the 1st of May 2014, the party defined a new organisational structure and created the Commission of Social Organisations. I interviewed the head of this Commission who acknowledged the weakness of *Alianza Pais* at the local level and the necessity of forging alliances with historical local actors in order to generate governance agreements. The first group targeted by the government was the indigenous sector.

I believe we have failed by focusing on the construction of a movement that responds to elections; we did not focus on a political project that constructs popular power; that is different. So in this moment we are working on those elements neglected in the past, because our horizon is the construction of popular power. The Commission of Social Organisations was created because this is a sector that we really need to define, as well as to generate relationships with historical actors who have been working on this political project in one way or another. We are interested in strengthening the social fabric, on capitalising on the investment made by the Ecuadorian State and the government of the Citizen's Revolution for the benefit of the collective whole. And we also want to identify agendas that enable us to generate governance agreements (Patricia Cervantes, head of Commission of Social Organisations-Alianza Pais. Interviewed in Quito, September 2014).

In December 2014 the *Alianza Indígena por la Revolución Ciudadana* (Indigenous Alliance for the Citizen Revolution)⁸¹ was created, an alliance between the government and specific indigenous organisations (part of FENOCIN, FEI, FEINE and indigenous leaders participated in CODENPE). A leader of FENOCIN interviewed in September 2014 anticipated the decision to come closer to the government arguing that they do not want to follow CONAIE's orders on how to proceed in this respect. 'We are tired of their

⁸¹ <http://www.alianzapais.com.ec/comunicamos/9153-alianza-indigena-en-movilizacion-permanente-por-la-revolucion-ciudadana> [Accessed February 2015].

[CONAIE's] manipulation. If we agreed with them we are then truly indigenous. If we agreed with the government we are then mercenaries, we sold our souls for money' (IL3).

The decision to forge an alliance with Correa's government shows, first, that there is no homogeneous position within the indigenous movement in relation to the government. Three important indigenous organisations show a different position to the one taken by CONAIE (and its member organisations: ECUARUNARI, CONFENIAE and CONAICE) and *Pachakutik*. Internal fragmentation has characterised the indigenous movement from its constitution until the creation of CONAIE in 1986 and *Pachakutik* in 1996. The fragmentation is due to various reasons: geographical (the division between Andean highlands, Amazonian lowlands and the coast played a significant role in their organisational history), cultural (numerous *nacionalidades* and *pueblos*), political (relationship with a multiplicity of actors: trade unions, political parties, the church, NGOs, international development agencies) and economic (the development of different economic activities in each region of the country: agro-export plantations in the coast, agricultural activities in the highlands, oil exploitation in the Amazonia) (Radcliffe, 2015). As explained in Chapter 1, CONAIE constructed a framework around the notion of *nacionalidades* that enabled the unification into one sole movement. From then until the rise of Rafael Correa to power, both CONAIE and *Pachakutik* marked the political direction of the indigenous movement. This gave CONAIE a central role in the articulation of the political project of the movement (CONAIE, 1994; Van Cott, 2005). The situation changed after the Constituent Assembly, when CONAIE and its member organisations started showing the first signs of disagreement with the government. In this context the fragmentation within the indigenous movement became apparent again. Interpretations pointing to the cooptation of indigenous leaders by the government (analysed in section 5.2.1) neglects the internal diversity, fragmentation and tensions within the movement.

On the other hand, the creation of this alliance between a sector of the indigenous movement and the government is significant as it actually expresses the paradoxical relationship between both sectors. They need each other because each of them holds resources needed by the other. While the indigenous movement is strong in its organisational structure, the lack of a strong leader affects the institutional political performance of the movement. Conversely, the strong leadership of Rafael Correa has

given *Alianza Pais* important national electoral victories (even winning a majority of seats in parliament), but this national electoral structure contrasts with a lack of organisational structure local levels of government (especially in the southern Andes and the Amazonas).

The formation of alliances with specific indigenous groups after the electoral setback at the local level shows that despite positive performances at the national level, Rafael Correa is still a leader in search of a movement with a strong organisational structure. The next section shows that the indigenous sector is still missing the benefits of having a strong political leader in consonance with their political project and being able to take it beyond the indigenous sector. Having this resource could allow the movement to, first, avoid the negative implications of forced alliances; and second, to extend their political representativeness from the indigenous constituency to the general Ecuadorian people. Yet, both the government and the indigenous sector represented by CONAIE are involved in a bitter power dispute which made them antagonists to the point of closing off possibilities of negotiation. In this context, *Buen Vivir* represents a dispute over places of power, which paradoxically has generated the stagnation of the transformative potential represented by the idea of *Buen Vivir*. The stagnation is related to the loss of the articulation between the horizontal (emergence of demands expressed by the people) and vertical (articulation of these demands in a political project represented by a charismatic leader) axes expressed in the first moment of convergence between the indigenous movement and the government at the Constituent Assembly. As explained in the previous section, in recent years the vertical dimension has gained supremacy over the horizontal one reducing significantly popular participation in decision-making processes.

5.1.4 Rise and decline of the indigenous movement: in search of the Messiah

Correa has never betrayed anyone because he has never lost his identity, he is the same; we, the social movements, never bother to know him deeply, we just saw his cover letter and said ‘this is the one who can take us out of the mud’. And only because we think there is a Messiah, a saviour who will solve our problems. The problem is organisations and poor people have always thought that the solution to our problems will come from someone who is above us; that is the vision of most people. But it cannot be anyone; it has to be someone who shows he is with the people. He is then seen as the saviour, as the Messiah, as ‘this is the one we were waiting for’. Correa was born with that, a lot of people saw that in him (...) our people, people from below, are not prepared to rule this country. That is why we are falling. It is always an alliance with another [leader] but no

one from the indigenous womb (Edwin Mina, indigenous leader ECUARUNARI *Sector Juventud*, interviewed October 2014 in Quito. Author's translation).

Political opportunities (agrarian reform, constitutional reforms, presence of elite allies), organisational alliances (with leftist parties, trade unions, NGOs, civil society organisations), and the strategic articulation of framing processes (peasant struggles for land, indigenous struggles for a Plurinational country, indigenous struggles in defence of *Pachamama* and land rights) positioned the indigenous movement, and particularly the CONAIE, as a powerful political force. However, with the beginning of the new millennium the movement faced new challenges. Alliances with unpopular political leaders and the participation of indigenous organisations' leaders in State institutions that were socially discredited undermined the position of the indigenous movement. This not only marked the decline of the movement's power to articulate and represent popular unrest, but also led to internal fragmentation within the movement. In other words, indigenous leaders' involvement in State institutions led to the weakening of their leadership in what Offe (1985) calls 'noninstitutional politics'.

The indigenous movement has had many important leaders in its history who have helped the movement to obtain important and crucial achievements, positioning it as one of the most organisationally sophisticated in the region (Van Cott, 2005; Lucero, 2006; Becker, 2008). However, individual leadership is not the most important pillar of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement. The strength of its political and social organising project has always surpassed the action of individual leaders within the movement. The indigenous movement represented by CONAIE in Ecuador has been able to create and consolidate a strong organisational structure able to advance independently of its leaders. Notwithstanding this feature of the movement, it was apparent in many interviews with indigenous activists that there is concern over the lack of a charismatic leader born out of the movement who can compete with Rafael Correa. The charisma and popular support that Rafael Correa has gained since coming to office has led them to rethink the role of leaders within and outside the movement, as well as their power to mobilise and push for the implementation of indigenous historical demands.

The indigenous elite represented by CONAIE argue about the necessity of forging alliances with leaders outside the movement in order to gain political strength. They state

that outsiders such as Lucio Gutierrez and Rafael Correa used indigenous demands, including them as part of their campaign discourse, but betrayed the movement once in power, weakening it. Past alliances have taken away CONAIE's credibility and popular legitimacy and have made their members wary of future alliances.

[In 2005] there was no candidate identified by social movements or left movements as the one who can mobilise our proposals. Correa started taking those proposals and incorporating them in his discourse; he started talking about the proposals elaborated by social movements: the plan of *Buen Vivir*, food sovereignty, the rejection of Free Trade Agreements, etc. He appropriated those proposals; he appropriated the indigenous discourse without approaching indigenous leaders but forming his ring of trust. He did not need to use them for long because for the next elections he was already well positioned. And he got what he was looking for, that other sectors sought to establish alliances with him during the campaign. That was the strategy of the indigenous movement, to forge alliances as we did it in the past with Lucio Gutierrez (Caty Machoa, indigenous leader *sector Mujeres*, CONAIE, interviewed in Quito, October 2014. Author's translation).

It is apparent in the interviews that there is also regret for not having a political leader who identified himself as indigenous, as in the case of Evo Morales⁸² in Bolivia. The Bolivian president represents, for Ecuadorian indigenous representatives, a leader who can both mobilise indigenous historic demands while making them general enough to gain support from those sectors not particularly close to the indigenous cause (Stefanoni, 2009; Garcia Linera, 2010; Silva, 2016). The confluence of these two characteristics is what they identify as the key factor that has enabled Evo Morales to gain control of the State. Even though Morales has been in recent years criticised by a sector of the Bolivian indigenous movement, his origins as a peasant leader and proximity to social movements puts him in a better position than Correa (Stefanoni, 2016; Postero, 2010; 2013). Silva (2016: 9) explains that in the case of Rafael Correa '[m]any on the left have wondered if Correa is "a true leftist." They see in his actions a brazen violation of the new constitution. He has been accused of denying workers, teachers, and indigenous organizations an effective voice in the government and distancing himself from the social movements'.

The demand for a leader born out of the movement was shared by most of the interviewees. However, authors such as Zamosc (2007), Becker (2010), and Altman (2013) have warned about the negative implications that an indigenous leader might have

⁸² Evo Morales, former coca growers' leader and current leader of the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement Toward Socialism, MAS), was elected president of Bolivia in 2005 with 54 per cent of votes, re-elected in 2009 with 64 per cent, and re-elected for a third presidential term in 2014 with 60 per cent of votes. Morales is the first indigenous president in the history of the country (Webber, 2011).

for their struggle: (i) an indigenous leader could emphasise the ethnic factor to a point of alienating the movement from other social agents who acted as allies in the past; (ii) the internal fragmentation of the indigenous movement can hinder the chance of having a leader representing the whole movement; (iii) the increasing rural/urban division among indigenous people can hinder the election of a leader able to represent them all. The authors remark that an indigenous leader has to have the political openness to connect the movement with diverse sectors of society.

The indigenous movement in Ecuador has led popular contentious action since the 1990s. The representation of popular grievances was achieved not only due to the movement's capacity to mobilise its members in an 'anti-neoliberal' struggle but also due to its ability to elaborate demands and include them in a coherent political project (*Buen Vivir* and the Plurinational State) (Altman, 2013). Notwithstanding the regret expressed for not having strong political leaders born out of the movement, interviewees remarked on the importance of intellectual *indigenistas* in the definition and mobilisation of *Sumak Kawsay* as a political idea. Most of these intellectuals are Kichwas, hold university degrees and are prolific publishers, have strong linkages with the main indigenous movement organisations and engage in significant participation with international organisations (United Nations, Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organisations, and so on). Their work has been crucial for the proliferation of their understanding of *Sumak Kawsay* (discussed in Chapter 4). However, reflection on the necessity of a politically strong leader who can guarantee entrance to institutional power structures provokes questions about the potential and limitations of social movements' political organisation when this feature is missing.

In addition, the indigenous movement has shown its capacity to build a solid national organisation, which connects local, regional and national scales of action (Andolina *et al.*, 2009). This structure appears to endure and advance independently of individual leadership. However, it is actually this absence that has forced the indigenous movement to create unsuccessful alliances with those who are strategically better positioned in the political arena. This was the case with Rafael Correa. He was an outsider of the Ecuadorian political scene without a movement and organisational structure to support him. Nevertheless, he has become the leader of the political process in Ecuador, suggesting that strategic and organisational reasoning cannot in itself determine the

course of political transformation. The materialization of contingencies (for example, the emergence of a charismatic and popular leader) plays a decisive role in determining the course of a political process.

5.2. Co-optation and (de)mobilisation

While the construction of a stronger organisational structure at different levels is still a pending task for Rafael Correa and *Alianza Pais*, they recognise that that is actually the strongest feature of one of their main opponents in the popular arena. If *Alianza Pais* wants to win the support of the popular sector it has to negotiate with one of the principal actors still controlling it: the indigenous movement. By 2005 the latter was weakened due to their mistakes at forging strategic alliances, which led to the loss of support and a poor performance in the electoral politics of *Pachakutik* as voters turned to other leftist parties (Van Cott, 2005). Nevertheless, the indigenous movement still enjoys popular legitimacy thanks to their struggle against neoliberal policies especially during the 1990s.

Since his emergence onto the political scene, Correa has identified important leaders and offered them positions in government. This was the government's way of negotiating with the indigenous sector. The acceptance of those positions has generated friction within the indigenous sector as many interpret the participation of their leaders in the State as an attempt to co-opt and divide their organisations. As explained in section 5.1.1, the indigenous movement and the organisations that represent it have always been fragmented by geographic, political, cultural and ideological positions (Lucero, 2006). However, the presence of Correa and *Alianza Pais* has exacerbated those divisions to the point of submerging the indigenous leaders in a state of disorientation. The president of CONFENIAE, Franco Viteri, explained in an interview the current division existing within the indigenous movement into three ideological groups: a historic one (mainly related to the demand for the construction of a Plurinational State), a pro-election one (in reference mainly to those supporting *Pachakutik*) and the *Correistas* (those who are willing to give their support to the government of Rafael Correa).

There are three groups within the indigenous movement, three ideological groups: one that stands for the historic struggle; a second one which is pro-elections that only thinks about elections for its own benefit; and a third one that grows with Correa, the *Correistas*, those who made alliances with him. The first two groups generated fragmentation within the movement, which started losing power. Then, in relation to Correa, some wanted the alliance and others did not. This created more fragmentation within the movement

The existence of the *Correistas* within the indigenous movement shows that the interpretation of the current relationship between the indigenous movement and the State *only* as cooptation is questionable as it neglects, first, the internal fragmentation within the indigenous movement that pre-existed the rise of Rafael Correa to power, and second, the agency of those factions willing to work along the government. In this sense, Lapegna (2014: 8) argues that '[c]ooptation privileges a top-down understanding of the relationship between the polity and social movements, downplaying relational and interpretative processes. It may be shortsighted to see the relationships between social movement and the polity in terms of the latter "manipulating" the former, or to assume that leaders can easily control their constituents'.

It is palpable from the interviews that the only way to get out of this state of confusion regarding the position of the movement *vis-à-vis* the government (and the strong leadership of Rafael Correa) is to denounce the co-optation of their leaders and ideas. In fact, the current relationship between social movements and the State in contemporary Ecuador has been widely interpreted as co-optation rather than participation (Zibechi, 2009; Adamovsky, 2009). Some of the indigenous organisations interpret the division within the movement as a result of the actions of the government. Key members are now working with Correa and supporting the *Revolución Ciudadana*. This is seen by the indigenous opposition as the abandonment of radical and transformational demands by those occupying governmental positions. For the indigenous sector opposing Correa, working with and for the government at this particular moment means leaving behind their political project, as well as the bond with the communitarian sphere, in order to align with the project of the government, which is still based on an extractive economy and is reluctant to open spaces for critical deliberation. This has redoubled the indigenous demand for autonomy and its opposition to the current government, closing off in turn any possibility of dialogue.

For others, however, the division within the movement preceded Correa and is marked by factors such as indigenous movement's participation in electoral politics and the

consolidation of an indigenous bourgeoisie. In this context, Correa's strategic approach to indigenous leaders exacerbated the fragmentation.

Within the indigenous movement there are now apparent class divisions. Since 1996, when *Pachakutik* was created, a sector of the indigenous movement has positioned itself at the electoral level and stayed there for too long. They are thinking of making strategic alliances with the right, while also accumulating money because they earn much more than a worker. This is generating a difference between a very small sector [of the movement] and the majority. This is happening not only with the sector involved in electoral politics but also with other sectors of indigenous people who have started making a lot of money. For instance, in Otavalo they have a lot of workers, large factories, hotels, textiles. So there is already a big difference between the indigenous person who is a worker, a peasant, a housewife, and the other who has employees and means of production, who works at the financial sector where you can see they are earning 35.000 dollars. They are all indigenous, some in and others out of the organisation. The wealthiest represent other interests, their own interests and those of this emergent indigenous economic group. They forged alliances with the bourgeoisie of this country. The distance from this sector started before Correa's government but it strongly increased with this government. In the coming years it is going to be evident that there are two fractions: those who have a capitalist vision who are dominated by the indigenous bourgeoisie emerging within the indigenous movement; and the other sector is the historic one that manages to unite people from below, that represents exploited, oppressed, poor people. This has never happened before but is what is happening within the indigenous movement. That rupture is going to happen. We are going to fight for the grassroots and for the ideology of the bases. We are advocating for that rupture because otherwise we are all together, and the enemy can easily hide in this crowd (Delfin Tenesaca, indigenous leader ECUARUNARI, interviewed November 2014 in Quito. Author's translation).

The history of the relationship between the indigenous movement and the State shows a complexity that cannot be reduced in terms of co-optation or demobilisation. The existence of internal divisions within the movement regarding the support to the government and the involvement in State institutions points to the diversity of positions within the movement in relation to these questions. The indigenous movement in Ecuador has a vast history of ambivalent relations with the State, but throughout its history has been able to position itself as a necessary interlocutor for governments and the State (Andolina *et al*, 2009). At times, the State has been considered an ally able to extend its regulations and legislation to the rural sector (Burbano de Lara, 2010; Tuaza, 2010); at times, the movement has demanded its protection; it has claimed the affirmation of rights using legal mechanisms (for example, the international ILO Convention 169); indigenous representatives have held official positions in State institutions (chapter 1); and the State has been also considered as a repressive and colonial apparatus, an "enemy" of the indigenous question (Bonetto, 2012; Quijano, 2009). These changes in the relationship between social movements and the State have been mainly due to the spaces and possibilities made available by the State, as well as those that have been opened up by the transformational actions of social movements.

I agree with authors such as O'Donnell (1993, 2007), Tapia (2009), and Natalucci (2012) that this dynamic between the State and social movements should be interpreted as a struggle for the institutionalisation of norms and interaction patterns. These processes of institutionalisation transform and redefine the forms of participation, the mechanisms of representation and the dispositive of legitimating, which as a whole forms the political community (O'Donnell, 1993; 2007). Institutionalisation as process mediating the social and the political implies, first, moments of creation of norms and actions; and second, moments of implementation of those norms and actions. I argue that what is at stake in contemporary Ecuador is related to the definition and implementation of *Buen Vivir*. In this struggle the dispute over the meaning and ownership of *Buen Vivir* is used, first, to trace political boundaries (as examined in Chapter 4) establishing distinctive positions within the political realm. Second, a set of political strategies is deployed in order to impose one particular understanding of *Buen Vivir* to guide its implementation (analysed in this chapter). It is in this struggle that the State transforms the previous channels and forms of participation of indigenous movements in State institutions. The relative autonomy (power) these sectors had in the past to manage public organisms and institutions of the State have been limited by the government of Rafael Correa (Ramirez, 2014). This is the result of power struggles between the government and the indigenous movement, which are reflected and impact on State institutions. As discussed in Chapter 2, the State appears here not as neutral but as an arena for the unfolding of disagreements and struggles between different forces.

In this sense, and contrary to the interpretation of indigenous opposition, I propose the consideration of the dynamic between the indigenous sector – as part of civil society – and the State in contemporary Ecuador not only as co-optation or demobilisation, but as the ongoing restructuring of the mediation between civil and political society through processes of institutionalisation. The interpretation of co-optation maintains and reinforces the divide between the social and the political spheres. I argue that the dynamic between movements and the State encompass a tension, in turn blurring that divide. This dynamic moves from movements of articulation and moments of differentiation and fragmentation both between and within these sectors. While the writing of the new Constitution that includes *Buen Vivir* as guiding principle can be considered as the moment of creation of new norms and articulation between the indigenous movement

and the government, the current dispute between CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa can be interpreted as a struggle over the implementation of those norms and patterns of action. In this struggle they are disputing spaces of power and are not willing to give in to the conditions imposed by the other sector.

As explained in Chapter 1, during the 1990s the indigenous movement forged an alternative project that started to be implemented in the mid-2000s when Correa gained power. Since then, the debate and struggle over crucial questions, such as the economic and development model, the role of nature, and individual and collective rights, has been reinforced and enacted by these political forces. Far from being silenced or suppressed, the debate has reached a higher level involving more actors than before (such as young environmentalists like *Yasunidos*) and more ‘sophisticated’ demands. Whilst before the *Revolución Ciudadana* popular demands referred to basic social rights such as health and education, today’s demands are related to mining projects, water usage and land distribution. The transformation and refinement of these demands illustrates the improvement of welfare provision by the State, as well as achievements obtained through popular struggle in Ecuador. This transformation has given social and political stability to the country, in turn shifting the dynamic between opposing forces. In March 2016, the UNDP (United Nation Development Programme) regional representative⁸³, Jessica Faieta, participated in a public meeting at the National Assembly in Ecuador. The UNDP representative highlighted the success of social and economic policies in Ecuador considering them as one of the best in the region due to the achievement of poverty reduction and social development. Social policies include an increasing public investment in areas such as health and education. From 2003 to 2011, poverty rates based on income have fallen from 49.8 to 28.6 per cent at a national level, from 71.3 to 50.9 per cent in rural areas and from 38.7 to 17.4 per cent in urban areas⁸⁴. In total, over one million people were lifted out of poverty.

Despite the recent decline of Correa’s approval rating, from 55 per cent (April 2015) to 46 per cent (June 2015), a large number of the Ecuadorian population is still willing to vote for Rafael Correa as he is still perceived as the leader who delivers longstanding

⁸³ <http://www.ec.undp.org/content/ecuador/es/home/presscenter/articles/2016/03/24/jessica-faieta-destaca-pol-ticas-sociales-de-ecuador-para-la-reducci-n-de-la-pobreza/> [Accessed March 2016].

⁸⁴ *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos* (INEC).

demands (CEDATOS, 2015). In 2015, the then Minister for Culture, Guillaume Long, explains that

...Ecuador has seen a great drop in inequality that has clearly contributed to the government's popularity. Redistribution, less unemployment [4.7 per cent in 2015] and the reduction of poverty are, in part, the consequence of high levels of public investment. In clear contrast to the neoliberal orthodoxy that government should be rolled back, the State has built nurseries, schools, hospitals, universities, roads and wider infrastructure.⁸⁵

These measures have generated massive support from both the working and middle classes⁸⁶. In order to construct effective and strategic alternatives to it, the opposition (including the indigenous movement) has so far failed to interpret the new social and political context in contemporary Ecuador by only appealing to the 'cooptation' explanation.

5.3 Repertories of action: New wave of mass demonstrations

From the 1990s until the mid 2000s large-scale demonstrations were a powerful political tool of the country's public sphere, led mainly by the indigenous movement. The crisis triggered by the implementation of neoliberal policies mobilised people on the streets demanding change. The number of socio-political conflicts as well as street mobilisations diminished (Table 6) in the period 2008-2009, with the arrival of Rafael Correa, the writing of a new constitution and the revitalisation of the Ecuadorian economy.

⁸⁵ Accessed December 2015: http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/10/is-latin-americas-peaceful-revolution-in-retreat.html?utm_source=Friends+of+Ecuador+Newsletter&utm_campaign=ed5617acc9-Al_Jazeera_Latin_America_Left_s_Future10_19_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_210dd317e8-ed5617acc9-309566297

⁸⁶ Accessed November 2015: <http://www.as-coa.org/articles/explainer-whats-behind-ecuadors-2015-protests>

Table 6: Socio- political Conflicts 2008-2011

Period	No. Conflicts
November 2007-February 2008	163
March 2008-June 2008	155
July 2008-October 2008	117
November 2008-February 2009	98
March 2009-June 2009	95
July 2009-October 2009	134
November 2009-February 2010	220
March 2010-June 2010	270
July 2010-October 2010	358
November 2010-February 2011	248
March 2011-June 2011	257
July 2011-October 2011	286

Source: *Observatorio Conflictividad Socio-Politica. Revista Ecuador Debate No. 73-84.*

Authors such as Sander (2011) warn about mobilisations against governments that identify themselves with the left, arguing that such actions can contribute to enhance the position of those sectors identified with the right spectrum within the political arena. The author argues that those social movements confronting governments such as the one of Rafael Correa might be ‘mistaking a vacillating ally for the enemy’ (Sander, 2011: 104). This partly explains the diminishing number of mass demonstrations between 2008 and 2009. However, the situation has changed in recent years as a group of diverse actors have been calling for mobilisations against the decisions of the government of the *Revolución Ciudadana*. The necessity of alliances of the indigenous movement has even led a sector to get close to representatives of the right political spectrum in Ecuador in order to oppose the power of Rafael Correa and his project of unlimited election. This is the case of *Pachakutik* and Guillermo Lasso, for example. The approach has been strongly criticised by CONAIE, among others⁸⁷.

From 2010 onwards, several demonstrations organised by the indigenous movement took place, mainly in Quito, without mobilising a large number of activists on the streets.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ <http://www.telegrafo.com.ec/politica/item/conaie-rechazo-reunion-entre-pachakutik-y-guillermo-lasso.html> [Accessed April 2015].

⁸⁸ <http://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/marcha-agua-ley-aguas-indigenas.html> [Available online. Accessed March 2012].

An example is the *Marcha por la vida y la dignidad de los pueblos* convened by the indigenous movement in 2012 to demand the Water Law. Barely 500 people attended this demonstration. The lack of support from the middle class for indigenous mobilisations is an important factor in the weakening of the indigenous movement, making apparent their loss of power at convening and mobilising a wider sector of Ecuadorian society. Humberto Cholango, a historic leader of the indigenous movement, explained this loss of support due to the creation of a new middle class working for the government of Rafael Correa.

Correa got it right with the organisational division. This division has different moments. The first one is the moment of the middle class. When Correa came to power there were nine ministries and around 300.000 public servants, today there are 20 ministries and one million public servants. What has he done? He created jobs for the middle class. Correa says ‘there are no *pelucones* [people from the right political spectrum] in this government’ even though they still control the economy, the industry, companies. But Correa created another right sector, a right within the government, a bureaucratic right which is the middle class working at the ministries. You find families from the poorest neighbours with a relative working in the government. So that family is not going to support our organisation while his relative has a salary. If that family says or do something against the government Correa discharges them from their jobs. In that way Correa managed to weaken the organisations and the social struggle in the country, especially in Quito where due to its history the middle class strongly supported the indigenous movement; we are not supported by the middle class right now (Humberto Cholango, former President CONAIE, interviewed August 2014 in Quito. Author’s translation).

However, since 2014 there has been a rise in large-scale mobilisations gathering an increasing amount of people as a strategy to show discontent with the government and to put forward movements’ demands and proposals (Table 7). The convenors of these mobilisations, however, represent a mix of sectors that identify themselves as representatives of the ‘*frente de unidad popular*’ (front of popular unity). The increase in mobilisations has also been accompanied by an increase in the number of people attending the demonstrations (although these new demonstrations do not equal in number the ones that took place in the 1990s). For instance, in September 2014 a demonstration was organised by the union *Frente Unitario de los Trabajadores* (United Workers Front), mainly against a new Labour Code proposed by *Alianza Pais*. While the union was the principal convener, the demonstration was a display of alliances between different sectors, such as indigenous groups, unionists, teachers, telecommunications workers, doctors, students, journalists, and environmentalists. As shown in Table 7, this coalition of actors marched together in several demonstrations. This indicates how Ecuadorian civil society is now working as a multi-organisational space in order to coordinate heterogeneous demands and resources (Natalucci, 2013).

Table 7: Chronology mass demonstrations May 2014 – June 2015

<p>May 2014</p> <p>Organised by trade unions against the new Labour Code discussed at the National Assembly</p> <p>July 2014</p> <p>Organised by the indigenous movement against the Water Law. Organisation of <i>Parlamento de los Pueblos</i> (Peoples' Parliament)</p> <p>July 2014</p> <p>Organised by unions, students and indigenous movements against the new Labour Code</p> <p>September 2014</p> <p>Organised by students against the rise of public transport cost</p> <p>November 2014</p> <p>Organised by trade unions and indigenous movement against the new Labour Code</p> <p>March 2015</p> <p>Organised by trade unions against the new Labour Code. CONAIE participated against legal eviction notice of its headquarters building</p> <p>May 2015</p> <p>Organised by indigenous movement, trade unions, student movements, doctors and teachers against FTA, the rise of public transport cost, re-categorisation of teachers' retirement funds</p> <p>June 2015</p> <p>Organised by indigenous movement, trade unions, environmental movements against changes on the national constitution</p> <p>August 2015</p> <p>National Strike organised by CONAIE, <i>Frente de Unidad Popular</i>, trade unions against constitutional changes, <i>Decreto 16</i>, against Water and Land Laws, in favour of free admission to universities, for bilingual education, against the FTA, against open-pit large-scale mining projects</p>

Source: *Observatorio Conflictividad Socio-Politica. Revista Ecuador Debate No. 73-84.*

Unlike the demands of the 1990s, which were general, universal and against a clear 'enemy' (that is, the neoliberal regime), this time the grievances and demands mobilised were eclectic, sectoral, and particular to each group:

- (i) against the new Labour Code;
- (ii) against the Telecommunications Law;
- (iii) against the exploitation of the Yasuni-ITT;
- (iv) against the recategorisation of teachers' retirement funds;
- (v) against *Decreto 16*;
- (vi) for bilingual education and indigenous justice;

- (vii) against the rise of public transport cost;
- (viii) against the Water and Land Laws;
- (ix) against the proposal to indefinitely re-elect all elected officials.

The particular agenda mobilised by the indigenous movement is mainly focused on five issues: 1) the rejection of the Water Resources Law; 2) the project of the Rural Land and Ancestral Territories Law; 3) indigenous justice; 4) the rejection of Free Trade Agreement; and 5) the rejection of the *Decreto* 16.

(1) the rejection of the recently approved Water Resources Law, which gives the State complete power to plan the provision of service and the management of water resources for irrigation and human consumption. Indigenous leaders claim that this new law, first, allows the privatisation of natural water sources; second, it does not recognise the existing administration of communitarian governments; third, it excludes indigenous and peasant representatives from decision-making bodies as the newly created *Autoridad Única del Agua* (a Plurinational and Intercultural Water Council was created as part of this authority to incorporate indigenous demands to control and participate in the design, promotion and evaluation of public policies related to water. Despite this, indigenous representatives still have no power to make decisions or reject regulations of the *Autoridad Única del Agua* as was originally demanded); and fourth, it does not cancel the concessions given to mining projects in the country⁸⁹;

(2) the project of the Rural Land and Ancestral Territories Law⁹⁰: indigenous leaders are demanding participation in the design of this law and the implementation of a consultation prior to its approval. They are calling for a law that allows the fair redistribution of land and food sovereignty, and that respects communitarian governments, their management over the territory, and collective land rights (as guaranteed in the national Constitution, article 171);

⁸⁹ <http://www.telegrafo.com.ec/politica/item/concluyo-debate-sobre-ley-de-aguas-documento.html> [Accessed June 2014]; <http://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2014/07/03/nota/3182026/indigenas-gobierno-se-confrontaron> [Accessed July, 2014].

⁹⁰ <http://www.telegrafo.com.ec/politica/item/comision-recomienda-la-realizacion-de-una-consulta-prelegislativa-para-la-ley-de-tierras.html> [Accessed December 2014]; <http://expreso.ec/expreso/plantillas/nota.aspx?idart=7126245&idcat=19308&tipo=2> [Accessed November 2014].

(3) indigenous justice: the Constitutional Court recently decided to limit the right of indigenous communities to manage and resolve their conflicts internally according to communitarian justice.⁹¹ The legal resolution dictates that communitarian justice can only be applied to minor conflicts, but not to those which are an attempt against life (e.g., murder, rape). This is interpreted as a limitation of the Plurinational State. Indigenous leaders have declared themselves in rebellion against this measure.

(4) the rejection to the recently signed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Ecuador and the European Union (EU). The struggle against the signing of Free Trade Agreements (FTA) has been a historical one strongly defended by the indigenous movement. In 2005, popular mobilisations stopped the bilateral agreement the government of Ecuador intended to sign with the US (Acosta *et al.*, 2006). The rejection of these agreements was one of the strongest demands by the time Rafael Correa emerged, a demand that Correa was able to integrate as part of his rhetoric⁹² (Rosales, 2013). In 2006 Rafael Correa wrote: “the idea of free trade benefiting always and everybody is simply a fallacy or naive closer to religion than science, and it does not stand up to a profound theoretical, empirical or historical analysis” (Acosta *et al.*, 2006. Spanish in the original. Author’s translation).

However, in 2014 the government of Ecuador signed a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union, which has caused unrest especially in rural and indigenous sectors. Isch (2014), Acosta (2014), Acosta *et al.* (2006), Falconí and Jácome (2005) argue that the agreements entailed more than bilateral tariff elimination. These authors argue that FTA affects legal sovereignty and food security; it has a detrimental impact on employment and on the subsistence of small and medium-sized enterprises; it restricts access to medicines due to prohibitive prices; it affects intellectual property on ancestral knowledge and the management of genetic material coming from biodiversity habitats; and finally, it restricts sovereignty in the establishment of processes of reduction or even elimination of public debt.

⁹¹ <http://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2014/08/10/nota/3356526/resolucion-cc-afecta-estructuras-queson-milenarias> [Accessed September 2014].

⁹² Rafael Correa and colleagues even published a book about this called “*El Rostro Oculto del TLC*” (The Hidden Face of Free Trade Agreements) (Acosta *et al.*, 2006).

The main beneficiaries of the FTA are large agro-industrialists exporting fish, bananas, cut flowers, coffee, cocoa, broccoli, fruits and nuts (Acosta *et al*, 2006). Those most affected by the FTA are peasants practicing small-scale agriculture. The unrest caused by the signing of the FTA strengthens the demand for the design and implementation of an agrarian reform, which has been at the top of indigenous and peasant movements' demands for decades. Land concentration is still high and living conditions in rural areas are still precarious. Although poverty rates have declined since Correa came to power, more than half of the rural population still lives below the poverty line. The indigenous movement is pushing for an agrarian reform and an economic model based on small and medium-scale agricultural production. Powerful elites in control of the agro-industry exercise pressure against any type of reform. By not confronting the economic elites and not dismantling structures of land concentration (5 per cent of landowners have 52 per cent of agricultural land), Correa has become the target of ferocious criticism (Machado, 2012).

(5) The rejection of the *Decreto 16*: this decree, signed by president Correa in June 2013, obligates social and civil organisations to register with State institutions and to inform them about their constitution, objectives, financial resources, and the composition of their members. The State is responsible for approving the legal standing of such organisations. Demonstrations and any act of social rebellion that questions public policies and/or State decisions can be interpreted by the State as a threat and, therefore, be used to dissolve the organisations involved. Indigenous leaders argue that this decree cannot be interpreted without considering activists' denunciations of persecution and the criminalisation of protests since Correa came into power.

This new wave of demonstrations is the third episode analysed in this thesis as a moment of articulation between different social and political actors as well as a moment of differentiation and fragmentation between these sectors and the government. It takes place in a context of social and political stability, marking a difference compared with actions in times of crisis (the 1990s and beginning of 2000s) and post-crisis (2006 onwards). This is the reason why I name this as 'new' wave of demonstrations in comparison with the ones taken place during the anti-neoliberal struggle during the 1990s. Mobilisations today demonstrate that those opposing the government are minorities, which by themselves are unlikely to be harmful to the power currently held

by the government of *Alianza Pais*. Pulling together heterogeneous grievances is the method by which these actors gather people on the street in order to show their power of mobilisation. For the indigenous sector, this means marching alongside sectors that are not necessarily close to their *Buen Vivir* cosmology. The effect of this is to weaken the political impact they have towards the construction of a Plurinational State to reach *Buen Vivir*. While all these actors are able to put together their demands in mass demonstrations, they fail to reach to a common framework that can work as an amalgam of all their grievances and claims. In the 1990s, the heterogeneity of the people marching and blocking streets in the main cities of Ecuador created a common voice for their struggle. This struggle was clearly identified as an ‘anti-neoliberal’ one and the foundations of an alternative were put on display. Now that *Buen Vivir* and the new Constitution have been legally proclaimed as representatives of the alternative to the neoliberal regime and heralded by a leftist government, there seems to be a lack of a mobilising ethos to unite different sectors in a powerful way.

The mobilisations were interpreted by the government and its allies as an attempt to destabilize the government. The government’s response was to mobilise activists in official demonstrations around the country to show support for the President and the government. The ethos in this case was clear: they were marching against the ‘*restauración conservadora*’ and in defence of the *Revolución Ciudadana*. In September 2014, the formation of a coalition of 15 local and national organisations of the left (including, among others, *Alianza Pais*, *Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano*, *Partido Socialista Frente Amplio*, and even a fraction of the indigenous party *Pachakutik-Chimborazo*) called *Unidos* was announced.⁹³ This new coalition’s main plan of action is the implementation of the *Socialismo del Buen Vivir*.

The mobilisations against the government provoked hostile reactions from the government. One form of retaliation taken by Correa’s government targeting the indigenous movement was to announce the end of the contract CONAIE had with the State for its headquarters building. The current Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion gave the CONAIE the order to vacate the building by the end of December

⁹³ <http://www.telegrafo.com.ec/politica/item/la-izquierda-ecuatoriana-se-une-en-un-inedito-frente-de-15-organizaciones.html> [Accessed October 2014].

2014⁹⁴. According to Correa, the main reason underpinning this decision is that a public building cannot be used for political, electoral, or religious purposes, citing that CONAIE was using it not for social but political reasons. CONAIE has occupied that building since 1990 when the then Ministry of Social Welfare gave the public building to the indigenous organisation on free loan. The building has historic and symbolic connotations for popular sectors: (i) the struggle against neoliberal policies; (ii) the evolution of the indigenous movement's organisational bases in Ecuador; and (iii) one of today's few spaces of organised resistance still marking limits and challenging the government and its *Revolución Ciudadana*. The news has been taken by members, supporters and even opponents to the movement (mainly people from the government) as a 'bad political strategy' for Correa.⁹⁵ CONAIE has declared it would not comply with the legal eviction notice. The President has been nationally and internationally criticised for this decision, while the indigenous organisation has received numerous expressions of support. To some extent, the signs of support and solidarity shown by other sectors and organisations have revitalised the indigenous position in the struggle for democratic participation. In turn, the image of Rafael Correa as the only centre of authority not willing to open spaces for deliberation and dissent has been made more apparent. Notwithstanding this the government's popularity and political legitimacy have not been particularly affected.

5.4 Final Remarks

In this Chapter I analysed the main resources, repertoire of action and the leadership structure deployed mainly by CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa. In relation to the latter, I argued about the importance of leadership to launch and make dominant a particular definition of *Buen Vivir*. I showed that the leadership and political legitimacy gained by Rafael Correa moved *Buen Vivir* from a lifeworld cosmology representing an alternative to capitalism to a vision of State consolidation that emphasises the construction of a sovereign nation. I also argued that the indigenous movement represented by the CONAIE have an enduring and strong organisational structure but the lack of strong political leaders that can take their idea of *Buen Vivir* beyond the indigenous sector put them in disadvantageous position. For the past 40 years, indigenous

⁹⁴<http://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2015/01/12/nota/4427996/temas-discordia-se-llevan-bases> [Accessed January 2015].

⁹⁵<http://www.elcomercio.com.ec/actualidad/conaie-alianza-pais-edificio-enfrentamientos.html> [Accessed January 2015].

organisations have been very active, and have had significant influence in the Ecuadorian political decision-making process. They have been able to raise the “Indian Question” as a political issue through their own efforts. This political activism included major political acts, such as forming political parties, participating in State institutions, and putting forward radical policy alternatives, such as the ones represented by *Buen Vivir*. The indigenous movement positioned itself as a necessary political interlocutor for governments and the State. However, the emergence of such an extremely popular and charismatic leader as Rafael Correa, representing a left-turn in Ecuadorian history, has led the movement to a state of confusion, which shows their lack of this particular political asset: a strong leader. Indigenous leadership that transcends the indigenous sector is becoming problematic to achieve and is proven to be an obstacle in their struggle. On the other hand, whilst the indigenous movement is still strong at representing the local level, the adverse electoral results in local elections for the government of *Alianza Pais* have shed a light on the lack of organisational structure of this political force at the local level.

In relation to the creation of alliances between a sector of the indigenous movement (excluding CONAIE) and the government is significant as it actually expresses the paradoxical relationship between both sectors. They need each other because each of them holds resources needed by the other. In this context, the fragmentation within the indigenous movement became apparent again. I argue that interpretations pointing to the co-optation of indigenous leaders by the government neglect the internal diversity, fragmentation and tensions within the indigenous movement.

Finally, I showed that a new wave of demonstrations in a context of social and political stability demonstrates that those opposing the government are minorities that need to form coalitions and put together heterogeneous grievances in order to show their power of mobilisation. The CONAIE is forging alliances with other sectors such as unionists, teachers, students and environmentalists. This indicates that civil society in Ecuador is currently working as a multi-organisational space in order to coordinate heterogeneous demands and resources.

Contrary to analyses that reduce this struggle to one of co-optation or demobilization, I argue that the “*Buen Vivir* era” in Ecuador has opened a new phase in the relationship

between social movements and the State, in which they are struggling over the definition and implementation of new norms and actions represented in their definitions of *Buen Vivir*. In this process of institutionalisation of *Buen Vivir*, these actors are reconfiguring the mediation between both sectors, processes of participation and mechanisms of representation. The locus of the struggle is the State but the struggle points to the need to rethink the definition of the State, its functions and institutions.

In the next chapter I analyse the expression of this struggle at the institutional level, the mainstreaming of one dominant understanding of *Buen Vivir* at the State level and the political opportunities that have consequently opened up.

6

Mainstreaming *Buen Vivir*: the institutional impact

Basically, we are doing things better
within the same model of accumulation,
rather than changing it,
because we do not want to harm the rich;
but it is our intention to have a more just
and equitable society
(Rafael Correa, El Telégrafo, 2012)

Introduction

So far, I have shown that the battle over the meaning and ownership of *Buen Vivir* is political. In Chapter 4 I have distinguished three main definitions of *Buen Vivir* supported by the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE, the government of Rafael Correa and environmental activists. I have shown that these definitions are the product of a process of rationalisation, which refers to actions that make definitions of *Buen Vivir* consistent with the political objectives of the groups supporting them. I have also demonstrated that this process of rationalisation points to the expansion of the instrumental and strategic rationality to trace boundaries between competing political forces in order to establish positions in a political realm which seems to be under a process of renewal. This process of renewal of political settlements is primarily characterised by: (i) a central role of the State in planning and controlling the economy, which has led to a greater control and regulation of market forces whilst at the same time increasing the State's decision-making power over public policy; (ii) the fall of traditional political parties; (iii) the rise of popular political leaders; and (iv) the articulation of a post-neoliberal political project represented by *Buen Vivir*. In Chapter 5, I have focused the analysis on the mobilising structures of the CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa. These mobilising structures refer particularly to the resources and strategies put forward by them with the main objective to impose their own definition of *Buen Vivir*. I have argued that indigenous leadership that transcends the indigenous sector is becoming

problematic to achieve and is proven to be an obstacle in their struggle. I have also exposed that the lack of organisational structure of the *Alianza Pais* at the local level is detrimental for the consolidation of their political force. Despite this organisational weakness, I have also shown that the strong political leadership of Rafael Correa and the popular legitimacy gained since in power have enabled *Buen Vivir* to move from a lifeworld cosmology representing an alternative to capitalism to a vision of State consolidation that emphasises the construction of a sovereign nation.

In this chapter, I distinguish two main political projects, one mobilised from above by the government of Rafael Correa pointing to the construction of a central State. The other is the one mobilised from below by CONAIE, which points to political participation in a plurinational State. From the qualitative analysis done in Chapter 4 and 5 I propose an analytical typology that summarises the principal conceptual and ideological lines of each competing project. I aim to demonstrate that the political project supported by the government is becoming dominant (mainstream).

I then move on to analyse the current expression of this dispute between the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE and the government at the institutional level by analysing the mainstreaming of *Buen Vivir* at the State level. The mainstreaming of *Buen Vivir* is related to the political structure and institutionalised context within which the process of struggle between the CONAIE and the government unfold. This is what has been discussed in Chapter 2 as the political opportunity structure (Tilly, 1978; McAdams, 1982; Tarrow, 1994, 1996), and it principally points to the links and interaction between institutionalised politics and social movements. In this process of struggle these actors seek to legitimise and strengthen their influence in selected policy arenas, building on their investments in framing and mobilising debate based on alternative interpretation of *Buen Vivir*. As explained in Chapter 2, the State is conceived here as the inscription of struggles between forces, a specific way of processing and institutionalising social contradictions (Lechner, 1980; Aricó, 1981; Zavaleta, 1990; Thwaites Rey, 2010, 2012).

I mainly analyse one dimension within the political opportunity structure that is named by Tilly (1985) as offensive actions. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the case of defensive actions, political opportunities are not so much the outcome of collective action as of structural processes and political structures, which are relatively independent of collective action. Once a movement has consolidated its organisation, new opportunities

and constraints for the movement result from the dynamic interaction between movements and political structures (McAdam *et al.*, 1996). Their actions are, therefore, named as offensive actions. Considering CONAIE's high level of social and political organisation as well as the active interaction this organisation has had with political institutions, it is in this particular set of actions that I focus my analysis. Within this dimension, I seek to understand a set of institutional transformations. First, I analyse the opening up and closure of political access. These changes show a modernising process at the institutional level. I argue that they also indicate a concentration of power in the State that is not accompanied by inclusive processes of empowerment and political participation of competing forces. Second, I analyse a set of policies related to welfare provision and the management of natural resources. It is argued that the prominent role the State has acquired in this function has helped to construct popular legitimacy based on attempts to subject markets to social results. The fact that the main financing source for social provision is still based on the exploitation of natural resources makes apparent the great paradox of the process opened up by *Buen Vivir* and the *Revolución Ciudadana* in the sense that it is where the tension between an ambitious social programme and the aim to curb extractive activities lies.

These transformations have allowed the government to achieve important goals in social policy as well as political legitimacy, which is reflected on electoral victories and approval ratings. At the same time, however, these transformations lie at the very heart of the conflict between the State and the indigenous movement. I aim to show that, as defined in Chapter 2, every State institution reveals the trace of the conflict that generated it. In this way, the process of transformation of the State should be thought of in relation to social conflict; that is, in a relational and dynamic way.

6.1 Two Political Projects

The construction of these two political projects is the result of my own qualitative thematic analysis, 'an emphasis on what is said rather on how it is said' (Bryman, 2008: 553) of interviews, literature review, media outputs and document analysis. Following this method, I have reconstructed two different socio-political narratives. The purpose of this exercise is to summarise the complexity of the data studied in Chapter 4 and 5 into two clear visions of the economic, the social and the political in contemporary Ecuador. Consequently, these two stereotypical political projects fulfil a twofold function. First,

they aim to describe the main conceptual and ideological elements put forward by actors, and second, they suggest an analytical framework to approach the mainstreaming of *Buen Vivir*.

The configuration of both political projects encompasses three main categories: (1) the economic; (2) the social; and (3) the political. I argue that both are postneoliberal and put forward a logic of resistance to capitalism, but stress different aspects. In the case of the *State of Buen Vivir*, what prevails is a drive to go against the rule of free market and the Washington consensus, and aims at taming capitalism. In the case of the *Social Movement of Buen Vivir*, what prevails is a drive to go against the dominance of Western modernity, and aims at eroding capitalism (Wright, 2015).

6.1.1 State of *Buen Vivir*

(1) THE ECONOMIC: two fundamental pillars of the State of *Buen Vivir* are the control of the economy and development by the State, and redistribution. The central role of the State in not only controlling the economy but also directing it to the fulfilment of rights (limiting in turn the action of the most powerful economic groups) appears here as one of the most powerful characteristics of the State of *Buen Vivir*, and its main difference with the neoliberal State.

(2) THE SOCIAL: the recovered welfarist and social responsibilities of the State has to be accomplished following two main premises: the first one is related to the nature of the economy controlled by the State; the second one is related to the nature of the rights to be fulfilled. In this sense, the State not only has to direct the economy to the satisfaction of social rights but it must promote and implement the diversification of the economy in order to overcome dependence on the extraction of natural resources and the exportation of primary goods. Success in this enterprise will allow the implementation of a native post-capitalist alternative in which countries such as Ecuador will not have to enact the economic and political role assigned by the global capitalist system, and therefore, will not have to fully participate in the reproduction of such a system. In this way, the role of the market will be shaped in relation to local necessities and the State will gain sovereign power.

(3) THE POLITICAL: The appeal to the ‘people’ in opposition to an oppressing order (the elites: the bankers, the *partidocracia*, mainstream press and foreign interests) enables the configuration of a new political identity antagonising with the dominant ‘other’. Populism here encompasses two dimensions or axes: one horizontal formed by the emergence of demands expressed by the ‘people’; and one vertical formed by the articulation of these demands in a political project represented by a charismatic and strong political leader. Corporatist structures within the State are seen as representatives of particular interests with little inclination to participate in the construction of the common (universal) good, and therefore, excluded. The government has not challenged neoliberalism with horizontality and participation, but with an increased verticality and concentration of power in the Executive.

6.1.2 Social Movement of Buen Vivir

(1) THE ECONOMIC: Capitalism is defined as the most extreme version of alienation, economic exploitation, inequality, coloniality of power and environmental degradation. The way to subvert this order is to focus on the local, communitarian and small-scale projects which can guarantee, first, the use of natural resources respecting the natural environment; and second, the real participation of the people in both the definition and implementation of Buen Vivir as alternative to development and neoliberal policies. The focus is placed on social and solidarity economy, an agrarian reform which can guarantee food sovereignty, democratic access to land respecting collective ownership of territories, and the creation of incentives and financial credits given by the state to support small projects.

(2) THE SOCIAL: Social agents are considered here as conscious of their culturally and historically constructed position; aware that their cultural and political identity involves contestation regarding the interpretation of meanings and hegemonic norms. They are also aware of the power relations contributing to their social construction. In this contestation, around which they build up their political and cultural identity, their lifeworld philosophy is brought up as source of new alternative meanings and practices.

The role of the State in the diversification of the economy will allow the fulfilment of individual rights and the rights of nature, considered one of the most original elements of the *State of Buen Vivir*. In close connection with the rights of nature are the collective

rights of native communities whose livelihoods are being affected by extractive activities. The full satisfaction of collective rights addresses this issue and recognises the importance of lifeworld philosophies that interconnect human and more-than-human entities. In addition, collective rights also point to the legal recognition of the exercise of self-determination and autonomy over matters relevant to the collective group. This points, therefore, to the reconsideration of the formal division of political authority within the State, to its decentralisation and redistribution of power, installing in turn a plural and participatory dynamic. This is directly connected to the definition of the State as plurinational and considered the main mechanism to overcome the colonial legacy still present in the nature, dynamic and action of the current State.

(3) THE POLITICAL: Participation in decision-making processes at all levels, the elaboration of representative demands, and the exercise of autonomy and self-determination are the most important elements included in this ideal type. They all point to the democratic and horizontal dynamic attributed to social agents. The lack of hierarchies and the prevalence of a practice of reciprocity are key elements of interaction among social agents. The assumption here is that social movements put forward a practice of democratization of decisions and a continuous socialization of deliberations on common issues following a relational rationality (opposed to the instrumental rationality imposed by the capitalist system). Their decisions and the demands mobilized are representative of the general, not of the particular.

The exercise of autonomy and self-determination are deemed necessary to retain the creative, rebellious and anti-establishment character of social agents. Therefore, participation in and engagement with State institutions is seen both as necessary to articulate diverse demands into State policies and into transformative practices, and as a decision to be cautious in order not to lose their disruptive capacity. In the exercise of this relative autonomy from the State, social agents deploy a set of strategies and take advantage of resources and opportunities made both by their own actions and by the potential opening of the political structure.

In what follows I aim to demonstrate that the mainstreaming of *Buen Vivir* at the State level refers to, primarily, the political project that I call above the State of *Buen Vivir*. In other words, the mainstreaming of *Buen Vivir* at the State level contributes to a new post-

neoliberal political settlement on the basis of the partial exclusion of the political project that I call the Social Movement of *Buen Vivir*.

6.2 Mainstreaming *Buen Vivir*: offensive actions in the configuration of post-neoliberalism

The political projects explained in the previous section underpin the political conflict that reign between the CONAIE and the government since Rafael Correa took power. The establishment of the State as responsible for the implementation of new policies of national development makes apparent the opposition between the projects mobilised by these two sectors. Conflicts emerge as this indigenous sector demands changes to the distribution of power in order to participate in decision-making processes, as well as to gain access to means of production, organisation and communication. In this dispute, antagonistic forces define the very nature of the State, as well as possible courses of action for State transformation. The transformations pushed by the government (from above) and the transformations demanded by socio-political agents (from below – analysed in Chapters 4 and 5) present both commonalities and differences. These are determined not only by the definition of the State held by each force but also by the dispute over the mechanisms of representation and participation allowed and demanded by each of these agents.

The vision of the State and the demands put forward by the CONAIE have been analysed in Chapter 4 in relation to the establishment of a Plurinational State. As defined in the political project of CONAIE (CONAIE, 2012), the construction of a Plurinational State implies, first, the inclusion of peoples and nationalities in State organisms and institutions, and decision-making processes, spaces from which they have been largely and historically excluded. Second, it implies the restructuring of State institutions in order not only to recognise the authority of existing communal governments but also to transfer financial, material and technical resources (decentralisation). This implicates the recognition of indigenous cultural and communitarian organisation, as well as the redistribution of wealth at a deeper level. Third, it involves the recognition and strengthening of distinctive cultures within the territory including their languages, identities, practices, traditions, knowledge, and education. And fourth, it includes indigenous collective rights.

As it going to be argued in the remaining sections of this chapter, the changes implemented by the government of Rafael Correa are not following this path. Far from the vision of a Plurinational State as defined above, these changes are in line with the centrality of the State, a modernisation rationale and concentration of political power. Far from the implementation of a more inclusive and horizontal dynamic that includes the participation of a plurality of sectors, the State in Ecuador shows verticality and the partial closing of channels of real and critical participation (discussed in Chapter 5). In this sense, it can be argued that the government of Rafael Correa has not challenged neoliberalism with horizontality and participation, but with an increased verticality and concentration of power.

The latter explains the conflict with a sector of the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE (among other sectors such as environmentalists and trade unions). Notwithstanding these conflicts, the government of Rafael Correa has been able to build up a strong popular legitimacy based on the repositioning of the State in terms of welfare provision and the strength of the national economy by escaping free market orthodoxy. These are not small achievements and need to be evaluated in the light of the historical context from which this government emerged (analysed in Chapter 1). The concentration of power mentioned above has been significantly displaced from market forces to the State. This displacement has not been achieved in a repressive way but by the generation of popular consensus via State social investment. This has been the result of offensive actions produced by the active interaction between the CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa. I analyse these actions in the following section. They have helped the government to construct a new legitimacy that has had effects in the political process opened by *Buen Vivir* and the *Revolución Ciudadana*. This matches the definition of postneoliberalism put forward by Grugel and Riggirozzi (2012: 3-4).

Postneoliberalism is, then, an evolving attempt to develop political economies that are attuned to the social responsibilities of the state whilst remaining responsive to the demands of 'positioning' national economies in a rapidly changing global political economy. Crucially, in much of Latin America it is emerging in the context of an unprecedented export bonanza that permits the adoption of more expansive public spending than has been the case since the 1980s.

6.2.1 Offensive Actions: Institutional transformations

a) The partial closure of political access

The government of Rafael Correa has implemented a process of dismantlement of corporatism's power within the State. The government has targeted all collegiate bodies where the private sector was over-represented, removing its power of vote and decision. Until Rafael Correa took power, corporate lobbies were closely associated with the conservative technocracy governing the country. However, the effort to weaken corporatism within the State has not only targeted economic powers. It has also pointed to the arrangements that exist between the State and civil organisations and unions⁹⁶, by which these groups have decisional power over specific matters. In the case of the indigenous movement, CONAIE took control of the institutional spaces focused on indigenous matters within the State: the DINEIB - *Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* (National Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education) created in 1988; CODENPE (*Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador* – Development Council of Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador) created in 1998; and the DINASI – *Dirección Nacional de Salud Indígena* (National Directorate of Indigenous Health) within the Ministry of Public Health, created in 1999. These institutional spaces aimed to implement policies and programmes for indigenous peoples.

In 2009, the government of Rafael Correa removed by decree (No.196) the indigenous control of the DINEIB (the institution that had, before the decree, administrative and planning independence). Since then, the DINEIB is under the control of the State through the Ministry of Education. The *Comisión Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* (National Commission for Intercultural Bilingual Education) was created integrating representatives of indigenous nationalities who are appointed under public competitive examination (based on merit and not by affiliation to indigenous organisations). CODENPE was eliminated in 2014 when the *Ley Orgánica de los Consejos Nacionales para la Igualdad* (Organic Law of the National Councils for Equality) created the *Consejo Nacional para la Igualdad de Pueblos y Nacionalidades* (National Council for the Equality of Peoples and Nationalities). Prior to the implementation of this law and the creation of the Councils for Equality, indigenous representatives were chosen directly by indigenous organisations. Since the implementation of this institutional transformation, indigenous representatives are chosen by merit through a public exam

⁹⁶ For instance, the uprising of the police force on 30th September 2010, which for many commentators was an attempt at a coup d'état, was linked to several institutional reforms to dismantle existing mechanisms of State protection of the police force.

(Peña Lopez, 2015; Vacacela, 2015). The limitation of corporate representation within the State is one of the reasons for the conflict between the government and the indigenous movement.

In recent years, both the government and the indigenous movement agreed on the necessity of State control of water. However, they disagreed on the composition of the new organism through which this might be implemented. The indigenous movement represented by the CONAIE demanded the formation of a Plurinational Council with the participation of indigenous representatives, governmental officials, the private sector, and sectors of civil society (communities, movements and social organisations). For the government, this option undermined its power over the sector and it rejected the proposal. This situation triggered important mobilisations and tensions between both sectors (analysed in Chapter 5). The government finally formed the National Secretary of Water in 2008, excluding indigenous representation. The debate on the Water Law shows the indigenous movement's demand for participation in the debates over laws, as well as the definitions of State policies.

The last two points are important as the dilemmas over social representation in the State and the battle over the definition of the nature of the latter are at the core of the conflicts between the indigenous movement and the government since the approval of the new Constitution and the rise of *Buen Vivir* as a political banner. This shows that the State is not neutral but the arena for the inscription of struggles between forces, a specific way of processing and institutionalising social contradictions (Lechner, 1980; Aricó, 1981; Zavaleta, 1990; Thwaites Rey, 2010, 2012). After several electoral victories, the government of the *Revolución Ciudadana* sees corporatist structures as representatives of particular interests with little inclination to participate in the construction of the common (universal) good. This attitude shows the government's interpretation of universal suffrage as the main mechanism of legitimate participation. The restriction imposed on the participation and decisional power of the indigenous movement within the State has been a serious challenge of indigenous autonomy. As discussed in Chapter 2, indigenous claim for autonomy does not mean the rejection of the State but actually autonomy within the State. What agents like the indigenous movement are demanding is to keep the places already won within the State, whilst at the same time redefining the

conditions of occupation of those places in order to gain power of decision in the construction of a Plurinational State.

The institutional transformation implemented by the *Revolución Ciudadana* goes hand in hand with the reconfiguration of political coalitions, as well as the restriction of the power of economic groups that in the past have operated to neutralise the function of the State. The set of reforms put forward by the government of Rafael Correa has allowed the State to hold more control and regulation over market forces whilst at the same time increasing the State's decision-making power over public policy. I argue that these changes are the expression of a process of renewal of political settlements in Ecuador.

One of the most important changes has been implemented on the role of the State in public planning. At the beginning of its government *Alianza País* eliminated by decree the *Consejo Nacional de Modernización del Estado* (CONAM - National Council of State Modernisation), which was created in the 1990s to support the privatisation of public companies and services. The creation of the *Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo* (SENPLADES – National Secretariat of Planning and Development) has re-established the link between development and State institutions, as well as strengthening the latter as the fundamental pillars for social provision. The rationale underpinning the creation of this new secretariat is the use of planning as a tool of the political process (Arsel, 2012). From 2007 to 2011, 103 laws were approved, 29 per cent of them were directly linked to State transformation and 23 per cent to the development regime, 30 per cent were related to the guarantee of rights (SENPLADES, 2012: 100). SENPLADES is responsible for the design and construction of the first and second *Buen Vivir* National Development Plans (2009-2013 and 2013-2017). These national plans act as the main point of reference for the design and implementation of public policies, programmes and projects, the State's budget, the investment and allocation of public resources, and the coordination of responsibilities between the central State and autonomous and decentralised governments.⁹⁷ The National Plan for Good Living 2013-2017⁹⁸ establishes 12 National Objectives for *Buen Vivir*, organised in three main subject categories, which

⁹⁷ Gobiernos Autónomos Descentralizados (GADs – Spanish).

⁹⁸ The document establishes 12 objectives, 93 goals, 111 public policies, and 1,095 strategic guidelines.

are State and popular power (objective 1); Rights and freedoms for *Buen Vivir* (objectives 2-7); and Economic and productive transformation (objectives 8-12).⁹⁹

SENPLADES coordinates the National and Decentralized System of Participatory Planning. Whilst emphasising the decentralised and participatory nature of the process of planning, the national government concentrates its power of decision in agenda-setting and resource allocation, connecting public planning and investment. This point is relevant to understand the conflicts at stake in contemporary Ecuador. Some interviewees for this thesis declared that the openness of spaces of real and critical citizens' participation is a 'political debt' with a small chance of being implemented due to the government's lack of political will to create institutional channels to open these spaces. SENPLADES' officials recognise in interviews that the government's priorities are the implementation of economic objectives and not the participatory ones.

As a consequence of the regained centrality of the State, ministries recovered power in setting up policy agendas. In previous decades, a multiplicity of agencies, councils and commissions kept control over relevant aspects of the public agenda (Echeverria, 2010; Verdesoto and Ardaya, 2010). Whilst these organisms formed part of the State structure, most of them were created by multilateral development banks to avoid the interference of ministries on decisive matters related to structural adjustments executed at the time (SENPLADES, 2009). With the dismantling of these organisms, ministries recovered control over their areas of incumbency.

In June 2013, the government created by decree the *Secretaria del Buen Vivir*. The main function of this secretariat is to engage with other State institutions to create and implement policies towards the attainment of *Buen Vivir*. The goal is to promote the

⁹⁹ The objectives are: 1- To consolidate democratic governance and construct the people's power; 2- To foster social and territorial equity, cohesion, inclusion; 3- To improve people's quality of life; 4- To strengthen citizen capacities and potential; 5- To build spaces for social interaction and strengthen national identity, diverse identities, pluri-nationality and interculturality; 6- To consolidate the transformation of the judicial system and reinforce comprehensive security, with strict respect for human rights; 7- To guarantee the rights of Nature and promote environmental sustainability globally; 8- To consolidate the social and solidary economic system sustainably; 9- To guarantee dignified work in all forms; 10- To promote transformation of the productive structure; 11- To ensure the sovereignty and efficiency of the strategic sectors for industrial and technological transformation; and 12- To guarantee sovereignty and peace, enhancing strategic insertion worldwide and Latin American integration (SENPLADES, 2013).

rights included in the Constitution to construct an ethical, responsible, and sustainable way of life. Since its creation, the head of this secretariat, Freddy Ehlers, has become a permanent character on national television talking about *Buen Vivir* in terms of happiness and against consumerism, a rather lighter version of what was first promoted by the government.

Harmony is part of *Buen Vivir*. Harmony means balance. A conscious life implies balance between mind, emotions, body and spirit. It also means harmony between people and between people and nature. For this it is necessary that a cultural transformation leads us to an era of human civilization where unconditional love, human coexistence and social justice constitute a new form of life. *Buen Vivir* has an external and internal scope. The external scope refers to the satisfaction of needs such as education, health, food, home and everything related to a decent life. The internal scope is related to Being and consciousness, sources of integral development and wellbeing (*Secretaria del Buen Vivir* webpage; accessed November 2014. Spanish in the original. Author's translation).

The decision to recover the power of action of ministries also affected the social sector surrounding previous institutions; that is, international agencies of cooperation, NGOs and consulting agencies, which have had less influence on public institutions since Correa came to power (Vacacela, 2015). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) designed by the United Nations have been placed at the same level of importance as the goals dictated by the National Development Plan. The MDGs have even been questioned as minimalist objectives in the pursuing of people's wellbeing (Ramirez, 2014). One negative effect of this decision is the isolation of ministries from social networks and collective agencies concerned with public policy matters (e.g., social movement's organisations, communitarian cooperatives, interest groups).

Next section analyses important achievements in social policy obtained by the government of Rafael Correa by applying redistributive policies. These achievements have enabled the government, first, to gain legitimacy and vast support of the Ecuadorian population. And second, social policy achievements have enabled the understanding on *Buen Vivir* supported by the government to become dominant.

b) Welfare Provision via Neo-extractivism

The definition of *Buen Vivir* mobilised by the government of Rafael Correa prioritises the satisfaction of social and economic rights above nature and indigenous rights. As explained in Chapter 4, at the heart of this definition are the elimination of poverty via the redistribution of wealth and the guarantee of universal social rights, with the State

acting as the main authority in planning and development. I also argue there that for the government it is only through exploiting natural resources that this can be achieved and the economy can be diversified, as high natural resource revenues would allow greater investment in other areas of the economy. For the government, this reason is strong enough to dismiss many of the contradictions between its rhetoric, policies and what is included in official documents and laws in relation to environmental protection, agrarian policies, and popular participation. This deepens the existing fragmentation between the government and the CONAIE.

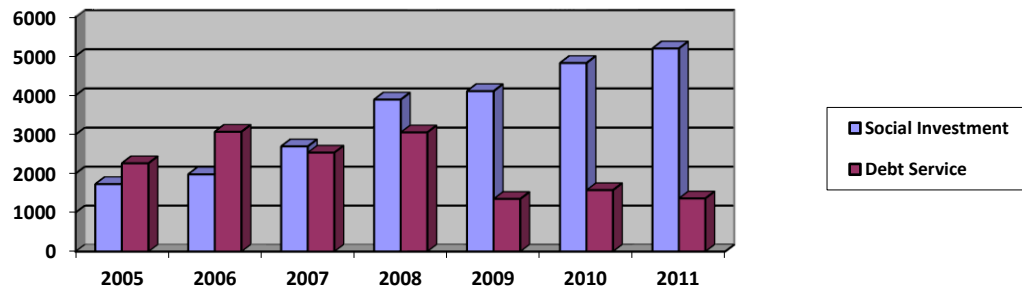
Rafael Correa used national ownership and governance of natural resources as the nodal point of his government's strategy to dismantle neoliberal policies (Perrault and Valdivia, 2010; Rosales, 2013). It increased the State budget by providing USD 2,500 million in additional revenues. Whilst this has been translated into an increase in social spending and redistributive policies, it has also deepened the country's already heavy dependence on oil revenues, in turn leaving the Ecuadorian economy vulnerable to market fluctuations. Gudynas call this new phase 'neo-extractivism' (2009), referring to the increase in resource extraction in order to use the extra revenues generated for redistributive purposes. Authors such as Gudynas (2009), Escobar (2010) and Escribano (2013) argue that despite introducing some significant changes, neo-extractivism does not challenge or question the premises of neoliberal governance.

The renegotiation of oil contracts¹⁰⁰ and the strengthening of Ecuador's oil companies (Petroecuador and Petroamazonas) were part of the government's strategy to nationalise resources and implement pro-growth economic policies. The reform of the *Ley de Hidrocarburos* (2006) recognises the participation of the Ecuadorian State in 50 per cent of the revenues generated by the difference between the sale price and the monthly average sale price on the date of signing the contract (*ingresos petroleros excepcionales*). Before this reform the revenues were absorbed by transnational oil companies. In 2008, this was modified by executive order (*Decreto Ejecutivo No. 1402*). Since then, the State has obtained 70 per cent of the revenues generated by contracts signed after 1st August

¹⁰⁰ Source: *Ministerio Coordinador de Política Económica, 2013, El desempeño económico y social de los primeros seis años del gobierno del presidente Correa (informe)*.

2008. The renegotiation gained popular support, boosting the government's positive image.

Figure 4: Social Investment and Management of External Debt 2005-2011



Values: millions of US dollars

Source: Banco Central Ecuador and Ministerio de Finanzas Ecuador

The renegotiation of oil contracts in 2006 provided USD2,500 million of additional revenues; capital repatriation brought back USD2,000 million (SENPLADES, 2013: 15). This was translated into a greater distribution of resources, an increase in public investment and in consumption subsidies (Figure 4). The reasons underpinning this decision were that public investment increases the aggregate demand, boosting economic growth in the short term. It injects capital and expands production generating economic growth and it generates additional investment (SENPLADES, 2013). For 2011, the growth rate was 8 per cent, up from 3.6 per cent the previous year and above the government's prediction of 6.5 per cent (Becker, 2013: 43).

The approach to mining activity has been different with a Mining Law passed in 2009, enabling large-scale mining activity. Davidov (2012) clearly expresses that

...oil has become the symbol of neoliberal restructuring and the IMF loan-debt paradigm that was eventually rejected. The mining sector, that, due to its limited development during the neoliberal 'oil' years, does not have such symbolic neoliberal 'baggage', has become a site for a new, ostensibly populist, resource nationalism which also involves the exploitation of natural environments for subsoil resources (Davidov, 2012: 14).

For Davidov (2013, 2012), mining activity is discursively mobilised by the government of Rafael Correa to reflect the expansion of a 'new and progressive' State that questions (only rhetorically) oil extraction by considering it part of the 'old' neoliberal economic growth policy. Agreements for open-pit large-scale mining projects have triggered new

conflicts between the government and indigenous organisations, who fiercely oppose mining activity and demand to be consulted on extractive activities that do or could take place in their territories (Bebbington *et al.*, 2008). The Constitution legally recognises their rights to be consulted but does not grant power of consent or veto over extractive endeavours. Correa insulted and degraded indigenous and conservationist movements for being ‘criminals and subversive terrorists’ (Kuecker, 2007; Becker, 2010). In February 2015, the creation by decree of a new Ministry of Mining (El Telégrafo, 2015¹⁰¹) was announced. The President also announced the implementation of new tax incentives to attract foreign investments.

Large-scale copper and gold mining projects taking place in northern Ecuador (Intag) and in the southeast (the mining projects *Mirador* and *Fruta del Norte* in the provinces of Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe) involved Canadian (Kinross and Corriente Resources) and Chinese (CRCC-Tongguan consortium, operating through Ecuacorriente, the Ecuadorian subsidiary) companies operating in these areas (Gallagher *et al.*, 2012). The *Mirador* mine has a deposit of about 2.9 million tons of copper (Alvaro, 2014) and once constructed, the mine will consist of six sites across a 10,000-hectare concession that overlaps with 6,000 hectares of the Protected Forest of the Condor Highland (Banktrack, *n.d.*). The law stipulates that companies must rehabilitate mines after completing the activity. However, the amount of waste, water, and energy used to carry out mining activities, as well as the construction of new roads, negatively affect local populations who question the social, economic and ethical principles underpinning decisions to allow the implementation of such activities in an area extremely rich in biodiversity (Carlos Zorrilla, interviewed in Quito, September 2014). Local indigenous populations fear that the implementation of these projects would prolong a historical process of cultural and environmental colonisation and dispossession (Harvey, 2014). These new mining projects have triggered increasing unrest, expressed in street protests (see Table 7 in Chapter 5) and the filing of a lawsuit by Ecuadorian NGOs and human rights groups that argue that the project violates the constitutional rights of nature.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.telegrafo.com.ec/politica/item/nuevo-ministerio-de-minas-se-crea-por-decreto-ejecutivo.html> [Accessed March 2015].

Ecuador is developing mining activity and investing heavily in it. For this endeavour, as well as for the development of other energy projects (large hydroelectric dam and gas projects) and national infrastructure, Ecuador has greatly depended on Chinese loans (Krauss and Bradsher, 2015; North, 2013). The China Development Bank has provided credits for oil, as it has done for other Latin American countries including Venezuela and Brazil. Chinese investment represents 57 per cent of the total foreign investment in Ecuador since 2005 (Krauss and Bradsher, 2015). Unlike the loans given by the World Bank and the IMF in the past, which came with structural adjustments programmes, the loans provided by China, which are of more than USD10 billion since 2005 to the present, come with commercial conditions (Gallagher and Myers, 2014). Escribano (2013) explains the mechanism by which China grants loans to Ecuador in exchange for oil.

...when the China Development Bank (CDB) grants a billion-dollar loan to Ecuador, Petroecuador pledges oil shipments to China to cancel the loan. Chinese oil companies then buy the oil at market prices and deposit their payments in Petroecuador's CDB account. CDB withdraws money directly from it to repay itself for the loan. In Ecuador, PetroChina deposits 79% of the oil revenue in Petroecuador's CDB account and diverts the remaining 21% to pay back the loan. Ecuador signed a US\$1 billion loan-for-oil in 2009, another in 2010 and a third – worth US\$2 billion – in 2011 (Escribano, 2013: 157).

The role China has played in the development of Ecuador has been crucial, considering the poor relations of the country with organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank (Escribano, 2013; Rosales, 2013; Gallagher *et al.*, 2012). The presence of China has provided help in the short-term by becoming one of the most important sources of credit. In 2011 these loans reached USD7,200 million. However, as a significant portion of Ecuador's oil reserves are already committed, China reduced in 2012 the loans and limited them to particular and concrete projects. This has had an impact on fiscal accounts, producing a deficit of 4.7 per cent (2012). For this reason, in 2013 the government of Rafael Correa obtained a loan from Goldman Sachs (USD400 million) setting Ecuador's gold reserves as a guarantee (BBC Mundo¹⁰², 2014). In June 2013, Ecuador issued bonds of ten years for USD2,000 millions (interest rate: 7.95 per cent). This implied getting the support of the IMF. The decision has been heavily criticised by the government's opponents.

In this moment the Ecuadorian State is in serious trouble due to the lack of economic resources. It has run out of money, there are concrete facts to prove it. The government comes back with its former ally the IMF, pawns a part of our gold reserve in Goldman Sachs. This proves that something is going on; we know nothing about the debt with China: how much is our debt with China? Then, it is not true that our economy is changing, it is not real. I

¹⁰²http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/07/140708_economia_ecuador_viraje_economico_correa_vp.shtml?ocid=socialflow_facebook [Accessed September 2014].

mean... if we are indebted, all the money they are producing through oil exploitation and mining, where is it going to go? That money is going to pay the debt we have, and the great infrastructure they are building up, and the splurges of this government (Pocho Alvarez, interviewed in Quito, July 2014. Author's translation).

The fact that credits are granted for oil, however, deepens Ecuador's dependence on extractive activities delaying the diversification of energy and economy policy. This creates an apparent permanent case of Dutch disease, which is defined as currency appreciation due to the increase on revenues of one particular sector. The sharp economic development of this sector causes a rise on the price of other exports, making them in turn less competitive in the external market, and therefore, causing their decline (Bresser-Pereira, 2007). The insufficient diversification of the economy is even recognised by SENPLADES:

Currently, the productive diversification of the Ecuadorian economy is insufficient; the participation of the manufacturing sector in the national product and the development of the service sector are limited. The economy is vulnerable to changes in the international context (especially export prices) and barely sustainable (SENPLADES, 2013: 29, Spanish in the original, author's translation).

The fact that the Ecuadorian economy has been dollarized since 2000 has limited Correa's choices in diversifying the primary export economy. Dollarization has affected exports by increasing their price whilst imported goods (mainly from Asia) become cheaper. External competition to Ecuador's weak industrial sector has hindered strategies for economic diversification. North (2013: 121) explained that neighbouring countries such as Colombia and Peru, who export many of the same commodities to the same markets, can devalue their currency and therefore sell cheap. In addition, remittances coming from Europe and the US, where most of the Ecuadorian population has emigrated, are currently sustaining the household economy of an important percentage of Ecuadorians.

These new economic policies repositioned the State in the economic realm and strengthened its welfare provision. The redistribution of revenues led by the State made the inclusion of a vast portion of marginalised population possible. The percentage of the population living on less than USD2 a day dropped from 37 to 9 per cent from 2000 to 2014 (World Bank, 2015). According to a report released by ECLAC¹⁰³ (2012), between 2007 and 2011 Ecuador reduced inequality by 8 percentage points (Rosales, 2013).

¹⁰³ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Between December 2006 and December 2012, more than a million people escaped from poverty (PNUD, 2013). In education, there was an increase in enrolment in education at all levels, the secondary school fee (USD25 fee) was abolished, free textbooks and uniforms were provided to schoolchildren, with free lunches for primary school children (Radcliffe, 2015:322). In addition, there was an increase in the availability of health services.

The implementation of social policies like the *Bono de Desarrollo Humano* (Human Development Bond) and the *Bono de la Vivienda*¹⁰⁴ (Housing Bond) has been highly valued by citizens. By 2010, over a million people (1,173,822) were beneficiaries of the Human Development Bond (Machado, 2012). For many analysts (Reyes, 2014; Baez, 2014), the *Bono de Desarrollo Humano* was the key factor that helped Correa to win the election in 2013. Furthermore, its rise from USD35 to USD50 implemented by Correa's government in January 2013 (right before the beginning of the electoral campaign) forced the other candidates not only to include this bond in their own campaign agendas but also to promise to increase the amount in case they won the election.

Table 8: Social Indicators 2006-2014

	Dec.06	Dec.07	Dec.08	Dec.09	Dec.10	Dec.11	Dec.12	Dec.13	Dec.14
Unemployment (%)	----	6.1	7.3	7.9	6.1	5.1	5	4.8	5
Poverty (National %)	38	36.7	35	36	32.7	28.6	27.3	25.5	22.49
GINI National: urban+rural	0.5396	0.551	0.515	0.504	0.505	0.473	0.477	0.485	0.466
HDI	----	----	0.697	----	0.701	0.705	0.708	0.711	----

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, Banco Central Ecuador and ECLAC (CEPAL)

¹⁰⁴ *Bono de Vivienda* is a real estate credit granted by the State. <http://www.rips.gob.ec/rs/> [Accessed July 2014].

However, some commentators (Radcliffe, 2015; Salama, 2015; Machado, 2012) argue that even though inequality has declined at a national level, the persistence of entrenched inequalities shows that the policies implemented have been inefficient in addressing complex social heterogeneity. Radcliffe (2015) argues that a narrow understanding of inequality that neglects intersectionality, that is, the articulation of different facets of social discrimination that as a result configure distinctive relations of power, leads to inadequate social policies in re-ordering unequal societies. Affirmative actions in relation to gender equality have been poorly redefined and instrumented. In addition, whilst poverty rates have dropped nationally, in rural areas – where the effects of the investment on infrastructure and social spending are still unseen – more than half of the rural population live in poverty.

The concentration of land among just a few landowners is still unaffected by government policies. The Atlas of Socio-Economic Inequalities of Ecuador¹⁰⁵ (2013, *Atlas de Desigualdades Socio-económicas del Ecuador*), together with the establishment of Equality Councils are important advances for the identification of diverse types of inequality but they still fail to recognise these inequalities as intertwined rather than as additive. In this sense, the aspects of inequality mentioned above question the inclusiveness of the policies implemented by the government. Current economic strategies have proven to bring poverty alleviation and a reduction of inequality in the short-term, but create doubts about the sustainability of such positive effects in the long term (Gonzalez-Vicente, 2011; Bebbington, 2012; Rival, 2012; Yates and Bakker, 2014).

The limitation imposed on economic powers is defined by Tilly (2010) as one of the general mechanisms with great influence in processes of democratisation. However, the reduction of influence of social and political agents, such as the indigenous movement, by arguing that they represent particular interests, questions the democratic character and political sustainability of these reforms. Institutional reforms designed to broaden the autonomy and sovereignty of the State without the participation of a plurality of social agents engenders a risk of bureaucratization.

¹⁰⁵ The Atlas of Socio-Economic Inequalities of Ecuador (SENPLADES, 2013) offers information on changes in education, health, poverty, gender violence, use of time and care, employment and social security, child labour and mistreatment, and housing, accounting for rural and urban disparities.

6.3 Final Remarks

In this chapter I analysed one dimension of the political opportunity structure, offensive actions, particularly relevant for the understanding of the mainstreaming of *Buen Vivir* in institutional politics. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) explain that offensive actions are the result of the dynamic interaction between movements and political structures, and produce new opportunities and constraints for the movement. The case of Ecuador, and particularly, the relationship between the CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa showed that the offensive actions put forward by the government significantly restricted CONAIE's participation in institutional politics helping in turn to legitimise and strengthen the position of the government in the political process.

First, I outlined two political projects that I named the State of *Buen Vivir* and the Social Movement of *Buen Vivir*. The construction of these projects was the result of my own qualitative thematic analysis. I reconstructed two different socio-political narratives to summarise the complexity of the data studied in Chapter 4 and 5 into two clear visions of the economic, the social and the political in contemporary Ecuador. These political projects underpinned the political conflict that reign between the CONAIE and the government since Rafael Correa took power. The establishment of the State as responsible for the implementation of new policies of national development made apparent the opposition between the projects mobilised by these two sectors.

Second, I analysed two offensive actions that allow the government of Rafael Correa to legitimise and strengthen the influence of their understanding of *Buen Vivir* in selected policy arenas. These actions are related to two main areas: first, institutional transformations designed to partially closure political access to corporativism as well as to reposition the State in the political realm; second, State social provision via neo-extractivism. The analysis showed that there have been significant transformations in these areas that have given the government of Rafael Correa political legitimacy and popular support enabling in turn the government's definition of *Buen Vivir* to become dominant. This has allowed the State to hold more control and regulation over market forces whilst at the same time increasing the State's decision-making power over public policy. In this sense, I argue there is a process of renewal of political settlements in contemporary Ecuador.

The analysis also shows that there is a tendency towards centralization and concentration of power in the State. Transformations are not accompanied by inclusive processes of empowerment and political participation. Far from the implementation of a more inclusive and horizontal dynamic that includes the participation of a plurality of sectors, the State in Ecuador relies on hierarchy and verticality in decision making processes, closing channels of real and critical participation. In line with the discussion of the dilemmas of the relationship between the State and social movements (Chapter 2), in the case of Ecuador the opposition of two different logics is apparent. The State implies a concentration of decisions on the management of the public (monolithic power), whilst social movements put forward a practice of democratization of decisions and a continuous socialization of deliberations on common issues. A constructive relationship between both parts will imply the intersection of vertical and horizontal dynamics. In the case of *Buen Vivir* in Ecuador, it is apparent the dominance of the vertical over the horizontal dynamic.

In the final chapter, I summarise the main findings of this thesis and their implications for the understanding of the relationship between social movements and the State in contexts of political change.

7

Conclusions

The Political Process of *Buen Vivir*: Contentious Politics in Contemporary Ecuador

When *Buen Vivir* emerged in institutional politics (that is, when it was included in national development plans, the national Constitution, political projects and governmental plans) it was subjected to a systematic process of rationalisation by different agents. Arguably, for the first time in Ecuadorian history, the same name (*Buen Vivir*) has become both a frame for collective action, as well as an institutional frame. I argue that the coexistence of these two frames, differently interpreted and contested by different parties, is at the core of the political process in contemporary Ecuador. The result of this was, as shown in Chapter 4, the configuration of competing definitions by different actors. Each of them assigns to this idea a specific meaning according to their ideological vision, position, demands and interests. The rationalisation of *Buen Vivir* allows the actors involved to establish political boundaries between them. In this way, this process of rationalisation has impacted the two main components of contentious politics: the organisation of insubordination (social movements in order to impose one particular understanding of *Buen Vivir* (analysed in Chapter 5), and the political structure (the State) by mainstreaming one particular definition of *Buen Vivir* at institutional level (analysed in Chapter 6).

In this thesis, I have exposed the political nature of the struggle over the meaning and implementation of *Buen Vivir* showing the power relations involved in its definition and construction. I have identified moments of articulation and fragmentation between the forces involved that redefine political boundaries in a process of renewal of political settlements in contemporary Ecuador from neoliberal to post-neoliberal that in turn changed the possibility of new demands and forms of insubordination. In doing so, I have shown the dynamic of social transformation involving active tensions between political

structure (State) and insubordination (social movements) avoiding essentialist or static understandings.

7.1 Research Questions and Contributions

In what follows I summarise the main findings of this thesis which answer the three research questions guiding this work, and their implications for the understanding of the relationship between social movements and the State in contexts of political change. These findings are justified on the basis of the analysis of the evidence provided throughout the thesis, which is a combination of substantial primary sources and material as well as the close detailed inspection of secondary resources related to *Buen Vivir*, the indigenous movement, the government of Rafael Correa and the State in Ecuador.

7.1.1 Research Question 1: *In what ways is the idea of Buen Vivir defined and contested? How are these definitions used and what for?*

The Rationalisation of *Buen Vivir* to Redefine Political Boundaries

I have addressed this question in Chapter 4 using ‘framing’ as primary category of analysis. This category (defined in Chapter 2) helped to show that the deployment of ideas, meanings and identities has become in Ecuador a political strategy. As analytical category, framing has been particularly useful to stress that the deployment of ideas and definition of meaning is actively produced by agents in the construction and interpretation of these ideas. Agents involved in the political process of *Buen Vivir* has not been considered in this thesis as passively reflecting, transporting or becoming determined by political and social realities, but actually actively and strategically constructing them. I have defined the process of rationalisation as the actions that make definitions of *Buen Vivir* consistent with the political objectives of the groups supporting them. This process points to the expansion of the instrumental and strategic rationalities at the expense of normative and moral considerations (Habermas, 1986; Domingues, 2000; Gane, 2002).

I have analysed the strategic definitions of three groups: the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE, the government of Rafael Correa, and environmental activists. The definition constructed by indigenous sectors is mainly focused on the construction of a Plurinational State as well as on the *Pachamama* as symbol of Andean philosophy and communitarian praxis. The definition of the government is centred on the recovery

of the State to guarantee universal social rights and redistribution of wealth. The definition constructed by environmental activists is based on the rights of nature granted by the national constitution and the practice of radical democracy.

I have shown that the political differentiation and fragmentation between these forces came after a first moment of political articulation represented by the Constituent Assembly (Chapter 1). The Constituent Assembly was a political event of deliberation and participation of a heterogeneous group of agents. This implied the mobilisation of people and resources and the negotiation of proposals that needed the consensus and approval of those participating. It is here when *Buen Vivir* consolidated itself as the proxy upon which different socio-political agents defined their position within the post-neoliberal turn dominating the country.

The agents constructing the competing definitions of *Buen Vivir* claimed the authenticity and legitimacy of their own definition and sought to discredit the ones given by political opponents. In this way, they established distinctive political positions in a process of renewal of political settlements. This process of renewal of political settlements has been primarily characterised by: (i) a central role of the State in planning and controlling the economy, which has led to a more control and regulation of market forces whilst at the same time increasing the State's decision-making power over public policy; (ii) the fall of traditional political parties; (iii) the rise of popular political leaders; and (iv) the articulation of a post-neoliberal and anti-capitalist political project represented by *Buen Vivir*.

I have shown that the indigenous movement drew political boundaries with the government of Rafael Correa and its mainstream understanding of *Buen Vivir*. This differentiation affected, in turn, the internal unity of the movement as it exposed the division of indigenous sectors supporting and working along the government. The government traced political boundaries, first, with the neoliberal elite: the *partidocracia*, bankers, and corporatist groups. Second, it differentiated itself from the opposing forces questioning current decisions on environmental and economic matters (environmental and indigenous movements and trade unions). Finally, environmental activists traced boundaries with the government of Rafael Correa.

The analysis of the strategic definition of *Buen Vivir* by competing political forces has shown that there is no one homogenous, monolithic and essentialising notion of *Buen Vivir*, but that is constructed and re-constructed through power struggles. In this way *Buen Vivir* has become a powerful tool to create and openly redefine subjective positions in the political and social arena in Ecuador.

The analysis has also shown that framing is not a unified and consensual process *within* forces. The discussion of the different frames (Chapter 4) showed that there are disagreements not only *between* but also *within* these competing forces. In the case of the frame mobilised by the CONAIE, indigenous leaders voiced their concerns over the political use, effectiveness and representativeness of their own frame that puts *Pachamama* and communitarian life at the centre. These concerns generated tensions within this sector of the indigenous movement (page 122). Critiques also arose within the government about their own definition of *Buen Vivir* (page 126). These concerns questioned how permeable the government was to critiques coming from those who do not agree with the fundamental pillars defended by Correa's government. This finding warns about the use of the category framing to refer only to the competition *between* framings, overlooking internal dissent, which is of equal importance in the analysis of a political process.

7.1.2 Research Question 2: What are the strategies deployed by competing socio-political forces to impose their own definition of *Buen Vivir*?

The importance (and the perils) of leadership to mainstream *Buen Vivir*

I have approached this question mainly in Chapter 5. To respond it, I have used 'mobilising structures' as main category of analysis. This category relates to the organisational dynamics of contentious action. It defines the ways in which formal and informal ties between people can serve as solidarity and communication facilitating mobilisation. One of the key dimensions within this category has been the leadership structure. Following Weber's definition (1968), I stressed the importance of understanding the emotional character of the collective as well as the interactional nature of charismatic leadership. Members play an important role attributing charisma to leaders. In this way, the extraordinary characteristics perceived on the leader work as inspiration to members.

I have shown that the rise of Rafael Correa as a strong and charismatic political leader (which coincided with the emergence in Latin America of equally strong leaders such as Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales) enabled the government to take *Buen Vivir* from a lifeworld cosmology representing an alternative to capitalism to a vision of State consolidation that emphasises the construction of a sovereign nation. In this way, strong leadership has been significant to impulse and make dominant a particular definition of *Buen Vivir*. Conversely, the lack of this political asset by the indigenous movement has shown to be detrimental as led them to unsuccessful alliances with negative implications for their political struggle.

Correa's position as an outsider of the political establishment allowed him to identify himself as a redeemer leader in opposition to the elites constructing at the same time a new idea of the 'people' as the legitimate sovereign with direct influence in the decisional realm. This is why Correa as well as the leaders mentioned above are considered today as representatives of the rise of populism in Latin America. Correa showed his ability to articulate and implement (although with uneven success) the inclusionary demands historically mobilised by popular agents and represented by *Buen Vivir*. This represented the articulation and positive dialectic of two organising axes of politics: one horizontal representing the emergence of demands expressed by the 'people'. And one vertical, formed by the articulation of these demands in a political project represented by a strong political leader.

I have also shown the perils of strong leadership in the political process when the two organising axes of politics mentioned above lose articulation. The dominance of the vertical axis, as it is apparent currently in Ecuador with a concentration of power in the Executive and the president, as well as the lack of popular participation and the democratisation of institutional politics question the democratic character of the government and political sustainability of the changes implemented. The concentration of power and lack of popular participation have led to a new wave of mass demonstrations in Ecuador, showing in turn that the implementation and consolidation of transformative practices need the involvement of and collaboration between the State and social movements. New coalitions among social actors (indigenous movement, students, environmentalists, trade unions) show that civil society in Ecuador is currently working

as a multi-organisational space in order to coordinate heterogeneous demands and resources.

7.1.3 Research Question 3: How is this contestation expressed at the institutional level? Which definition is becoming dominant at the State level and what are the consequences of this?

This question has been approached in Chapter 6. I have proposed two main answers.

a) Two Political Projects

The construction of these two political projects is the result of my own qualitative thematic analysis. I have reconstructed two different socio-political narratives acting at different levels. The political project constructed from the top-down by the government of Rafael Correa follows a State-centred strategic logic of social democracy and is named in this thesis as the *State of Buen Vivir*. The political project constructed from the bottom-up by the indigenous movement follows a society-centred vision of insubordination, and it is named here as the *Social Movement of Buen Vivir*.

The principal characteristics of the *State of Buen Vivir* are: (i) the control of the economy and development by the State, directing the economy to the fulfilment of rights and limiting the action of the most powerful economic groups; (ii) the diversification of the economy; (iii) the recovering of the welfarist and social responsibilities of the State; and (iv) the appeal to the ‘people’ in opposition to an oppressing order. The characteristics of the *State of Buen Vivir* correspond to the logic of resistance that aims at taming capitalism.

The principal characteristics of the *Social Movement of Buen Vivir* are: (i) a focus on the local, communitarian and small-scale projects to counteract the harms of capitalism, reinforcing bonds of solidarity, equalitarian participation and self-determination; (ii) the construction of cultural and political identities based on lifeworld philosophy; (iii) the fulfilment of collective rights as well as the rights of nature; and (iv) democratic and horizontal dynamic.

I have argued that both projects refer to logics of resistance to capitalism aiming at either eroding or taming it. There are moments of articulation and moments of differentiation

between them. These projects set the horizon in relation to which political actors define their positions and interpret events.

b) Offensive actions: institutional transformations

The second answer to Research Question 3 refers to the political opportunity structure, and particularly, to the offensive actions of CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa. The mainstreaming of *Buen Vivir* is related to the institutionalised context within which the process of struggle between the CONAIE and the government unfold. It points to the links and interaction between institutionalised politics and social movements. Offensive actions are the result from the dynamic interaction between agents and political structures (McAdam *et al.*, 1996). I have analysed two offensive actions. The first one refers to transformations in the structure of the State that have had as a result the partial closure of political access to corporativism (including CONAIE). The second refers to the role of the State in the provision of social protection via neo-extractivism.

b1) The Partial Closure of Political Access

The government of Rafael Correa has implemented a process of dismantlement of corporatism's power within the State. The government has targeted all collegiate bodies where the private sector was over-represented, removing its power of vote and decision. Until Rafael Correa took power, corporate lobbies were closely associated with the conservative technocracy governing the country. However, the effort to weaken corporatism within the State has not only targeted economic powers. It has also pointed to the arrangements that exist between the State and civil organisations and unions, including CONAIE, by which these groups have decisional power over specific matters.

b2) Welfare Provision via Neo-extractivism

I have shown that the government has been able to build up a strong popular legitimacy based on the repositioning of the State in terms of welfare provision and the strength of the national economy by escaping free market orthodoxy (although without abandoning a modernization rationale). Political legitimacy was constructed on attempts to subject markets to social results. The redistribution of wealth led by the State has had a significant social impact reflected on poverty alleviation, reduction of unemployment and inequality, increment of enrolment rates in education at all levels, and the increase in health service provision. The fulfilment of fundamental rights had been made possible

thanks to the presence of the State. These results have legitimised the definition of *Buen Vivir* constructed by the government which has been able to mainstream it at State level. Ecuador's indicators show important changes and improvements that have real impacts on people's lives. On the other hand, Ecuador's economy is still dependent on extractivism and this has had also negative effects on certain sectors of the population, mainly indigenous groups living in rural areas whose collective rights have been denied or neglected by the persistence on resources exploitation. This, in turn, shows that there is not a strong political consensus on going beyond the extractive economy, which translates into moderate support for the indigenous and ecologists movements' call to go beyond extractivism.

7.2 The Political Process of *Buen Vivir*: implications for the understanding of the relationship between social movements and the State

The political process of *Buen Vivir* in Ecuador means the complex-multifaceted dispute over the leadership of actions of change that moved the country away from a neoliberal course. The rise of *Buen Vivir* divided Ecuadorian politics into two opposing camps, one demanding change and one resisting it, the former being the focus of this thesis. *Buen Vivir* divided the public space and defined the nature of political change (gradual, rapid, progressive or not, social democratic, anti-capitalist, etc.) in the structuring of moments of articulation and fragmentation, constructed upon the interplay of ideals and practices. In this way, it has developed a process or, as the title of this thesis suggests, the political process of *Buen Vivir*.

Within this process, transformations encompass the repositioning of the State in the control of planning, development and social provision, which has guaranteed President Rafael Correa's popular legitimacy, with more than eight years in power. It implies, on the one hand, a significant reduction of social movements' power of representation of the popular field. This has been the result of the emergence of such a charismatic leader as Rafael Correa and significant mistakes made by the indigenous movement in the past, showing the importance of leadership in the political process. On the other hand, the contradictions of the government in its attempt to diversify the economy have opened an interstice that social movements are taking advantage of to revitalise their position and struggle. The new wave of mass demonstrations entails changes in comparison with the popular struggle of the 1990s. The indigenous movement does not lead the struggle

anymore and for that reason needs to forge alliances with other sectors that are not necessarily close to the indigenous vision of *Buen Vivir* and social transformation. On the other hand, the demands elaborated by these agents have become more sophisticated since the satisfaction of basic needs is fairly covered by State social provision. In this way, demands do not point to social rights but to the fulfilment of the rights of nature, and the democratic distribution of water and land.

The tension existing in the relationship between the government of Rafael Correa and the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE goes in line with the conceptualisation of the State (Chapter 2) which defines it as having a relational nature and as the inscription of struggles between forces, a specific way of processing and institutionalising social contradictions. In this way, the process of transformation of the State has to be thought of in relation to social conflict, that is, in a relational and dynamic way.

This research shows that important transformations have taken place in the process, as well as conflicts and contradictions that arise in relation to further implementation. It demonstrates the importance of political leadership (and the limitations arising from it), of enduring organisational structures and of the elaboration of meaningful and representative political projects able to articulate demands and visions of their implementation. These aspects, political leadership, organisational structure and meaningful political projects, constitute fundamental features of a process of change. The political process of *Buen Vivir* points to the restructuring of the State and to the relation of social agents with it. In the process, the above mentioned aspects interplay and excel according to the power struggle unfolding between different agents. An ideal dynamic would suppose a balanced coordination of the three aspects. Currently in Ecuador, political leadership prevails over the other two, explaining the conflicts arising from this dominance.

Therefore, the approach to contentious politics put forward by Tilly, Tarrow, Diani and McAdam has been assessed relevant for the analysis of the political process of *Buen Vivir*. It has provided pertinent analytical categories (framing processes, mobilising structures and political opportunities) that have allowed me to connect politics and identity. In this way, it has enabled to go beyond the dichotomy proposed by the identity-

based approach (page 65) and the resource mobilisation approach (page 67), that is, between the prominence of either expressive or instrumental actions. By using the political process approach I have been able to analyse the contestation of ideas and meaning, the investment on mobilising, and link these two factors of contentious action with the structure of the State in a conjunctural moment in Latin America's history when the State is claimed back as key actor in the political and economic realm.

Whilst the political process approach has enabled me to understand the relationship between collective action and political structure, has not provided a definition of the nature of the State pertinent for the Latin American context. I have argued that in the political process the role of the State changes. It goes from the domination of the neoliberal model to an attempt to construct a post-neoliberal order with the State attempting to subject markets to social results. I have, therefore, connected the work of Tilly and Tarrow with the one elaborated by Latin American Marxist authors (Lechner, Arico, Thwaites Rey). These authors put forward a definition of the State as relational, not neutral, and as a platform for the inscription of social conflict. By using this understanding of the State, I have avoided questioning negatively the participation of social movements in State institutions considering, in turn, the State a crucial interlocutor. On the other hand, I have pondered the positive involvement of the State in processes of transformation. I have argued in favour of considering that it is at the level of the State that movements wage their principal struggles.

This thesis focuses on social transformation involving active tensions between political structure (State) and insubordination (social movements). It does so in the context of the rise of *Buen Vivir* in institutional politics in contemporary Ecuador. It offers a detailed sociological analysis of the agents involved in the process, providing a comprehensive account of their historical background, goals, frame definitions, and strategic actions. Away from essentialist or static interpretations on the matter, it argues that the political process moves through complex dynamics, involving moments of articulation and fragmentation in which agents and events move closer to or away from what was here identified as two political projects: the *State of Buen Vivir* and the *Social Movement of Buen Vivir*.

7.3 Theoretical Contributions

This research posits two main theoretical contributions.

First, it provides an interpretation of postneoliberal transformation away from binary interpretations (revolution-reform, emancipation-cooptation), highlighting key aspects of a complex dynamic that encompasses both transformations and continuities. Within these transformations, the repositioning of the State as the main locus of struggle, as well as responsible for controlling planning, development and welfare provision, is a major step towards the establishment of a postneoliberal order. The elaboration of an alternative project, represented here by *Buen Vivir*, is another crucial factor. The existence of ambiguities and struggles in its definition and implementation proves the complex relationship between ideals and practice. Finally, enduring organisational structures are shown to be crucial for the consolidation of a postneoliberal dynamic.

This thesis moves away from the interpretation of co-optation, which dominates debates on the relationship between structure (the State) and insubordination (social movements). It argues that interpretations of co-optation depart from a top-down approach of social and political dynamic without fully accounts the ambivalent but mutual relations between social agents and the State. This thesis shows that the line in Ecuador separating the social from the political is blurred and an interpretation of co-optation would only reinforce that division. The understanding of co-optation is based on strong normative judgements regarding the division between the social and the political that to a great extent neglect the multiple historical relations between governments, social movements, political parties and so on.

Second, it makes a contribution in its eclectic use of theory. It develops a productive relationship between a Marxist theory of the State coined in Latin America and a Weberian version of the construction of rebellious solidarities pursuing a thorough historical and sociological analysis. In analyzing the struggle of contemporary indigenous movements in cases such as Ecuador where they are already consolidated and recognised as political actors, the focus was placed on the organizational challenges they face in this new phase that I call the political process of *Buen Vivir*. In this sense, the approach advanced by Tilly, Tarrow and others writing on contentious politics offers a good analytical framework. I also set up the main conceptual coordinates to understand the specificities of the State in Latin America, its past and current role, and the dilemmas

of a necessary relationship between the State and social movements. I argued in favour of a conceptualisation of the State as relational and as a platform where social conflicts are inscribed and processed by State machinery, which in turn is transformed by the process. In this way, I proposed going beyond dichotomous thinking in the relationship between insubordination vis-à-vis structure (co-optation vs. emancipation; institutional power vs. communitarian autonomy; and so on) in order to capture the ambiguities and complexities of relational processes of social transformation.

7.4 Future Research

I assert that this work is original and contributes to the ongoing debate on current socio-political and economic challenges in the region. At the same time, I acknowledge the scope for further research that will allow me to explore the relationship between insubordination and political structure at the local and regional levels.

Firstly, in this thesis the focus is placed on a limited number of agents who were particularly important to the rise of *Buen Vivir* in Ecuador. National indigenous movements' confederations, such as CONAIE, are considered here as key protagonists and are therefore, central to the analysis. In other words, my work is centred on the elites within the indigenous movement, as well as within the government. They were chosen due to their historic role in the mobilisation of popular demands, as well as for their close links with the State. Other agents situated at the local and community level were left out of the analysis. Research situated at the local level would have provided a different level of analysis in relation to the gestation of demands, the creation of bonds of solidarities, local realities, the implementation of alternative local projects of *Buen Vivir*, as well as the effects of the implementations of State policies at the local level. What can be called social movement bases (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007) provide information on the ideological traditions, informal networks, and communal solidarities that act both as the precondition of the formation of the movement, as well as the support for the movement's activities. Such an analysis could create enough input to be compared with the current status of the movement at the national level (the findings of this research). I do think this can motivate further future research plans.

Secondly, at the theoretical level, this research still relies on work produced in the North (although this is critically appraised), and for that reason can be easily labelled as Eurocentric. I consider that an approach to the study of social movements and the State of the South by the South is still to be constructed. Those that exist at the moment provide few analytical categories to grasp the complex historical and socio-political dimensions of these agents. They also present an essentialising and decontextualised view on the matter (discussed extensively in Chapters 2 and 3). A critical revision that acknowledges political, cultural and economic differences is needed for a more accurate interpretation of contentious action in Latin America. However, the core points of theories such as New Social Movements approach and Marxist approaches are relevant in the analysis of contentious action in Latin America.

Lastly, the time frame of this research extends to the beginning of 2015. Whilst writing these final lines, new and unexpected changes are taking place in the region. New governments of the right are taking power in countries such as Argentina, as well as winning legislative elections as in the case of Venezuela. Brazil is facing an institutional crisis. Ecuador and Bolivia face challenges in the coming general elections. All these changes indicate a new political dynamic in the region out of the scope of this research.

The findings of this thesis allow me the formulation of new research questions which I will seek to develop in future projects. I aim to expand the research on social transformations involving active tensions between the State and social movements at the local level as explained above. A comparative analysis of the interaction between the State and indigenous movements at the regional level (countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, and Colombia share similar social problems) would be also particularly important in order to grasp the complexity of *Buen Vivir* as political project. The interaction of the three fundamental factors studied in this research (different political openings to collective action, competing ways of framing collective action and organisational forms) could be further analysed at different levels of action and in different contexts. In this way, the generalisability of the argument proposed in this thesis, which particularly applied to the relationship between the faction of the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE and the government of Rafael Correa, could be tested in relation to other countries and indigenous movements.

APPENDIX

List of Interviews

Whilst in Ecuador I carried out in-depth, semi-structured interviews with representatives of indigenous movement's organisations, governmental officials, and representatives of political movements, environmental organisations and academics. With most of them I met several times in formal and informal settings. Most of the interviewees were willing to be identified. I used pseudonyms in the cases of those who expressed their desire to remain anonymous.

- 1) Severino Sharupi, indigenous leader *Territorios y Tierras* CONAIE.
- 2) Angel Criollo, head of Communication CODENPE.
- 3) Edwin Mina, indigenous leader *Sector Juventud*, ECUARUNARI.
- 4) Attawallpa Oviedo Freire, academic.
- 5) Luis Macas, indigenous leader CONAIE.
- 6) "Pocho" Alvarez, filmmaker.
- 7) Leonidas Izas, president of indigenous base organisation UNOCAN.
- 8) Carmen Lozano, indigenous leader *Sector Mujeres*, ECUARUNARI.
- 9) Ivan Carrasco Montalvo, consultant in SENPLADES.
- 10) GOS1 (anonymous), government official SENPLADES.
- 11) GOS2 (anonymous), government official *Secretaria Nacional de Gestión de la Política*.
- 12) Alberto Acosta, academic.
- 13) Esperanza Martinez, co-founder *Acción Ecológica*.
- 14) Franklin Ramirez, academic.
- 15) Santiago Ortiz, academic.
- 16) Tania Laurini, filmmaker and environmental activist.
- 17) Pablo Ospina Peralta, academic.
- 18) IL1 (anonymous), indigenous leader FENOCIN.
- 19) Samuele Mazzolini, academic.
- 20) Patricia Cervantes, head of Commission of Social Organisations – *Alianza Pais*.

- 21) Caty Machoa, indigenous leader *Sector Mujeres* CONAIE.
- 22) Franco Viteri, indigenous leader President CONFENIAE.
- 23) IL2 (anonymous), indigenous leader FENOCIN.
- 24) Humberto Cholango, indigenous leader CONAIE.
- 25) Apawki Castro, indigenous activist.
- 26) Yvonne Yanez, co-founder *Acción Ecológica*.
- 27) Carlos Zorrilla, activist.
- 28) Carlos Viteri, assemblyman.
- 29) IL3 (anonymous), indigenous leader FENOCIN.
- 30) GOS3, government official Ministry of Environment.
- 31) Alexandra Proaño, President nationality ANDOA.
- 32) Delfin Tenesaca, indigenous leader ECUARUNARI.
- 33) Marcelino Chumpi, *prefecto* Morona Santiago province.
- 34) Estefania Montalvo, director of Communication – Ministry of Environment.
- 35) GOS4 (anonymous), government official Secretariat of *Buen Vivir*.
- 36) GOS5 (anonymous), government official Ministry of Social Development.
- 37) Carlos Nuñez, indigenous leader *Sector Juventud* CONAICE.
- 38) SML1 (anonymous), social movement's activist *Alianza Pais*.
- 39) IL4 (anonymous) indigenous activist CONAICE.
- 40) IL5 (anonymous), indigenous leader FEINE.

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